

ENGAGING STORIES:  
MEANINGS, GOODNESS, AND IDENTITY IN DAILY LIFE

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With this dissertation I've attempted to encircle the idea of *engagement*—a term that's becoming more and more popular of late as public institutions attempt to frame how exactly they work with, for, or on, the public. In this work, I address four questions. What is engagement, institutionally speaking? How might institutions need to reconsider engagement? What is engagement for me? And ultimately, so what?

The short answer is that engagement is a story. It's a story we tell ourselves about how people (should) interact with one another to make the world as it is, the way it should be. That being said, there are many different stories of engagement that fit this rubric—from unjust wars to happy marriages. They develop different characters, different settings, and different meanings, and in the end these stories have different morals with different consequences. These differences matter.

With this dissertation I try to do away with some of the muddle between these different stories. I am not trying to do away with difference—just trying to give difference fair play. I also tell a very different story of engagement gleaned from my own experience and the experiences of a number of others in Tompkins County, NY. It's not *the* right story, it's just a different story that I think holds promise. Lastly, I discuss how all of these stories might change the way we think about our own work, and the work of institutions, in democratic society.

As you come to read further, you'll notice that I've framed this dissertation around choices we each have and make. I hope this framing facilitates further discussion around engagement. In that spirit, the dissertation has been fully published on a website that includes

comment-ready text and enhanced multi-media. It's my intention that this website, and the interactive conversation it can allow, be an experiment in a type of public scholarship it seeks to promote. If you'd like to read the dissertation in that format, go to [www.pokesalad.info/engagingstories](http://www.pokesalad.info/engagingstories). Ultimately, I hope our conversations might help me, and us, understand this idea of engagement in our daily lives.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Armstrong was born and raised in Hot Springs, Arkansas. After high school, he quite nearly enlisted in the military save for the insistence of his sister(s). He took a college entrance test and just barely received a ride to work himself through the University of Central Arkansas, matriculating in August 2001—just before America went to war.

He earned a degree in biology but decided against pursuing medicine. Instead he joined the Peace Corps and lived for two years in Ait Bou-Gamez, Morocco where he assisted in the founding of a women's cooperative. He then served as an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer for Heifer International in Rutland, Massachusetts.

John came to Cornell University in Fall 2009 to study small ruminant animal science. Through various twists and turns he found himself entering a MS/Ph.D. program in Adult and Extension Education. With funding provided by the USDA-AFRI Food Dignity grant and the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines he then took on this study of the cultural history and present discourse of public engagement. As of June 2015 John lives in Detroit, Michigan.

For Jemila Sequeira, who befriended a stranger at her door.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The most curious ambiguity in a piece of modern writing arises when an author attempts to relay a sense of who is speaking. Printing the author's name followed by in-text citations of other authors' names is, for me, the most farcical manifestation of this attempt. I've had the pleasure to meet and share stories with a great many people who flood my mind when I think about this work. There are a great many people who contribute to this we as I put words to paper. I'll try to capture some of that we here.

First, I wouldn't be here without the endless support of my family. My father taught me carpentry, nudged me into community work, and has always been at my side and in my mind. My mother fought for my education in particular. How she managed to raise me and my sister Sineca to be the people we are, I'll never understand. To my sisters, Sineca, Brandy, and Iris, you've inspired me and kept me going more than you know. I'm constantly grateful for the opportunity to be a little brother. My stepmother Judy and my stepfather Otto have supported this rather odd family through thick and thin. My grandmother, Ona has been a particular joy to my life—picking me up after school for those many years, being a welcome break before I went to work, always giving a bite to eat and big hug. She in particular has more stories than I'll likely ever know. For the whole family, those above, aunts and uncles, cousins and distant others, I'd wager to say that we've shared more stories than any family on the planet. My life in stories started with you. I always think of you when I'm writing. You're always in my writing. And you're my best audience.

To my second family, the friends I came to know over two year in Morocco, you're priceless. In good company I think we came to learn about ourselves amid the discomforts of trying be good people in communities not our own. I learned enough over those two years with you and from you to be uncomfortable when I came back. That discomfort is what started this dissertation so thanks for making me uncomfortable. Our friendships and our yearly reunions keep me going.

The family of friends I've met through Cornell has been a most eclectic bunch. I'll try to give them in a rough chronological order. To Terry Tucker, thanks for that first chat and sharing a bowl of chili with me. We seemed to understand one another and that's exactly what I needed. Thanks to all the Hubert Humphrey Fellows who let me practice being a guide around Ithaca. To Julia Crane, Bradford Condon, Ellen Crocker and all the Plant Pathology crew—thanks for putting up with my philosophizing and in general being a great group of people. To Butch Wilson, thank you for starting my interest in adult education theory among the great company of Tim Shaffer and Tom Archibald. I'm so very happy to have known the Education Department at Cornell. To Jessica Cañas and Cassady Fendlay, thanks for sharing time with me on our travels. To Juliana Fulton, I'm quite happy that we both like dancing and that we don't mind fixing up old houses. I'm excited for Detroit. To Devon Jenkins, thank you for being my guide and friend to Niger and back again. To Scott Peters and Christine Porter, thank you for supporting my work in spirit and funding. Thank you to Todd Dickey, Melissa Rosario, and Justine Lindemann for all the insight and hard work on our report on graduate student engaged research. To Davydd Greenwood, thank you for being a mentor for all of us aspiring action researchers. To Travis Vachon, Katie D'Amico, Charles Haitjema, the CRP crew, the cPARN crew, the KYX crew, the attendees of my most epic birthdays, and the many friends throughout Ithaca, you are the best. Thank you to William Keeton House for providing the best work environment anyone could ask for. Thank you to the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines for supporting a rather odd first-year writing seminar. Thank you of course to my committee—Scott Peters, Sofia Villenas, and Richard Kiely who have let me try things out and be creative with this dissertation. I can't imagine having a better group of scholars to share this work with. Thank you to all the people who gave me a coffee or a beer over the past six years. I owe you one.

Much of this work has been supported through the Food Dignity Grant—USDA-AFRI Competitive Grant no. 2011-68004-30074. Written by Christine Porter in conversation with many others, this grant has brought together some of the most interesting people from across the



nation working for food justice and food sovereignty. The fifty some odd people involved in this grant would be impossible to do justice here. I'd just like to thank, in addition to Christine, Gayle Woodsum, Hank Herrera, Daryl Marshall, Monica Hargraves, and Jim White Wolf Sutter. When we meet it seems we're always pushing for more and I've tried to sustain some of that spirit in this writing. Above all thank you Jemila Sequeira, without you I wouldn't be here today.

Jemila has been a dear friend and she's the threshold through which I've had the opportunity to build some of the most transformative relationships in my life. Through her influence I've come to know some of the most wonderful people in Tompkins County: Larisa Camacho-Lillie, Caleb Thomas, Elan Shapiro, Phoebe Brown, Anne Rhodes, Ann Martin, Fabina Benites Colon, Zaneta Clarke, Kirby Edmonds, Olivia Armstrong, Ken Schlather, Jhakeem Haltom, Monica Arambulo, Damon Brangman, Jamila Simon, Dani Ferris, Margo Hittleman, Kerra Quinn, and so many others. Collectively this community has taught me so much. It's immeasurable.

As you can see, I have a longer list of debts than I can manage. This dissertation is a failed attempt to say thank you to all these people above. I hope you can see this writing as a humble commemoration of Us. I've tried to make my writing as beautiful as you all are to me. Thank you.

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## PREFACE

This dissertation tells a story. It tells a story about how people relate to one another—particularly how they relate across important differences. Differences of race, class, schooling, knowledge, and more broadly culture and power. I'm very interested in a genre of this relationship story that's erupted on the public scene in the past 25 years as a story of *engagement*. Public institutions, be they city governments, non-governmental organizations, healthcare providers, or universities, are consistently and increasingly framing their stories of engagement—namely, how they relate to broader or specific publics, and vice versa.

These *hows* of relating to one another across our differences have far-reaching implications for our institutions, our politics, our ethics, and our identities as citizens and professionals. Consequently I'm interested in looking at these "stories of engagement" more seriously, and I hope you as a reader are too.

I'm writing this dissertation to interest, provoke, and inspire you folks that are working to build better relationships across difference—a challenge I'll wager the stories presented in this dissertation as well as our own stories of engagement take on in various ways. This dissertation is particularly geared toward folks working in the third space between institutions and the public. If you are, like me, a graduate student wanting to make your research more democratic, read this dissertation (and help me out). Likewise, if you are a coordinator of a community-based organization, read this dissertation (and see if it makes sense). Furthermore, if you are a university professor, institutional staff member, activist, social worker, or interested citizen, please read this dissertation (and contribute to the needed conversation).

The challenge of this dissertation, and the engagement it tries to prefigure, requires the conversation I've hinted at above. I'm attempting to write this text in a way that invites that

conversation. In that spirit, I've created a website that attempts to perform its own relationship with you the reader via the ability for you to comment and discuss elements of this dissertation in the margins of the text. I'd encourage you to read the document there if you like: [www.pokesalad.info/engagingstories](http://www.pokesalad.info/engagingstories)

In the following pages that preface the actual dissertation, I've covered a number of topics you'd do well to peruse. These topics go further into the *how* and *why* I'm writing in the particular style I've adapted for this dissertation and some useful guidelines for how you might read the text. In one particularly important section, I've detailed my practice of using parallel texts which upon first glance (as seen in the first chapter) you might find rather odd. I'll also point you to some reference material that isn't in the body of the text but rather available in the many appendices that accompany the dissertation.

### **My performative commitment**

I believe this dissertation must be a performance.

I believe that any good performance must show more than it tells.

These two statements affect why and how I write. So before I begin there are a few things I'd like to clarify about performance that are implicated in the writing of this dissertation and will be helpful to keep in mind as you read it.

I'm sure you'll agree that in any performance there is a lot that occurs offstage. The director or writer of a performance rarely includes in the actual presentation, the how and why of their choices to shape a play, poem, or movie in a certain way. The stagehands are kept off camera, or veiled in black. Before the curtain rises on opening night, a director has shifted the intonation of a character, or given a treatment a Brechtian tone, or cut a certain scene from an original piece. In short, choices have been made about how best to perform a particular story to achieve one end or multiplicitous ends. Likewise I have ends in mind as I write this dissertation--certain things have been kept offstage, other things have been brought to the fore, in an effort to show more than tell.



First, the body of the text is suffused with story. For instance, rather than tell you what engagement means, I use stories to show you what engagement has meant in numerous cases in the current literature (as in the "Narrative Topography" chapter). In the narratives that bridge elements of the dissertation I show you how I came to write a specific piece, rather than tell you why a piece must be written. Counter to many academic conventions, you'll notice I haven't told you the theoretical underpinnings of my storytelling method before the text. I've jumped right into the narrative so to say. I'll attempt to show you what stories can do, rather than tell you. Placing a philosophical and methodological review before the performance would, in some ways, dull its edge and limit your seeing of it.

Needless to say, the method behind my madness must be defensible and therefore I must make it available to you. While I've explained my method in the body of the text in piecemeal fashion, I haven't treated narrative theory in any holistic sense. Rather, I've written a treatment of narrative theory as it applies to this dissertation in a large retrospective appendix to the text. I hope it's as useful as speaking with a writer or director post-reading or post-viewing a particular performance. If you aren't keen to read a text before reading the theory behind what made it, then you can read the theoretical appendix beforehand. Though be forewarned that I often refer to elements of the main performance in that appendix.

Second, in addition to using stories to show rather than tell, I've chosen to take what normally occurs offstage in academic texts and bring it forward. I've made this choice out of some frustration with academic norms of writing, but also out of a creative impulse to try something new. I'll explain. Some academics may think intellectual inquiry does start, can only start, or should start with a review of the academic literature. But if you take the time to ask an academic, or anyone for that matter, where an intellectual inquiry, a curiosity, or passion, got started—I mean *really* got started—they'll likely perform for you some kind of often-left-out story. Bucking that trend is what I intend to do in this dissertation. I intend to perform for you, the reader, a story of inquiry. Indeed, we might think of this writing as a "method of inquiry"

whereby I'll tell certain stories but also urge you to go out and find your own(Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 971).

In being a story, this dissertation has a something like a beginning, a middle, and an end—though it's more complicated than that of course. This dissertation has a plot with characters, crises, and surprises—but that's not all. In difference to most academic writing, the stories I'm telling aren't trying to drive you to one particular destination. To visualize my adopted task of encircling the idea of engagement in an open way, while reading think of yourself in a clearing surrounded by a series of doors. Behind them is a glimpse of a certain engagement story written from a certain perspective. In this dissertation I will try to open as many of these doors, these storied perspectives, as I feel necessary to spur a serious conversation. I will leave these doors open rather than dismissively shutting any one of them. I'm not looking for closure which might make you feel anxious or lost because I'm not telling you what to do. I'm just trying to make your choices more apparent. In this way I hope these stories remain thresholds through which you might see your own truths. I'm not trying to drive you to one destination, despite the kinds of engagements where I personally find hope. In writing this dissertation for myself as well as a large audience of academics, family, and friends, I must admit that where we start this story, won't be where we end up. We go deeper, and the journey does become more selective as it progresses—my opinions become more pronounced. Toward the end of the dissertation and its appendices you'll notice I refer back to moments at the beginning. The story bends back on itself. It becomes reflective and I hope that invites your reflections as well.

In review, I've decided to keep many of the stagehands (in my interpretation: high theory, methodological conventions, validity defenses) offstage in the main performance. I've also taken what is normally offstage in academic writing and placed it center stage. The story of my journey to and through learning, along with the attendant characters and crises, forms the backbone of the text and will undoubtedly influence how you read the piece. Together these two choices and others I've made along the way may flip the scripts, or tear down the fourth

walls that are commonplace in academic practice. I'll further explain the rationale for my choices in the lengthy appendix I've mentioned previously. Teasingly, as you might guess, my rationale has much to do with an idea of *engagement* that this performance explores.

Still, there is one more thing I'd like to cover in this preface. I've used some unconventional writing styles in this dissertation that warrant explanation.

### **A curious writing style**

In particular, I need to explain three elements of my writing style. From the most mundane and technical to the more exciting they include my use of personal and conversational pronouns, my regular use of muses, and my development of writing parallel texts.

The first you may have noticed already. I speak from my first-person voice. In this performance it's never "this study shows..." or "according to the data..." but rather "I find that..." or "In my opinion...". While writing "I" in academic prose was often thought to be heresy, thanks to vast amounts of literature from ethnography to philosophy, my use of "I" can perhaps enjoy some academic favor.

You'll also notice that I refer to you, the reader. Sometimes, I even refer to us. This is still a little uncommon and might seem odd. I'm indebted to Ben Fink (2014) who helps me explain this unconventional style. I'd encourage you to read his dissertation. I, like Ben Fink, am writing about relationships between people and the dialogues they can and do have with one another. In short I'm writing about politics of the everyday sort. This type of political work begs the use of these interpersonal pronouns but these words have inherent risks. The words "you," "us," and "we" will likely assume something wrong about you and the relationships we (might) share. With some exceptions, I likely don't know you. Assuming I might is always a risk. It might go terribly wrong if I assume things about you that are incorrect, and I likely will. There are a lot of ethics involved in how opaque we are to one another. I've covered some conversation around ethics in Appendix A. Suffice to say, with this dissertation being about relationships *and* conversations in content, form, and function, taking the risk of trying to know us is

unavoidable and necessary. You and I, namely us, are implicated in the subject of this dissertation. We can't get away from that fact. Consequently I'll use interpersonal pronouns throughout my writing.

A second note on style is that I make ample use of muses throughout this performance. I'm not talking about goddesses of inspiration but rather people I've encountered along my path who have directly or indirectly inspired me to take up and respond to certain questions, and to do that inquiry in certain ways. Academics are required to cite sources of inspiration in text, but with the large exception of biographers and historians rarely do academics take reference to the point of reverence. Now I don't mean reverence in some dogmatic sense, but rather in a way of appreciating more fully the many gifts that others so freely give.

I've been fortunate to receive gifts from a number of people in writing this text. Of particular note, for the past four to five years I've come to know two mentors in the flesh: Jemila Sequeira and Scott Peters. I've also come to know, through their writings and biographies three other individuals: Mary Parker Follett, Ivan Illich, and Ben Okri. In various chapters and the appendix to follow these muses will serve as my inspiration, but also as my auditors. They'll give me assurance that people, in some ways much like me, have asked or are asking the questions I'm asking now. I hope they provide me with some authority but only in so much as they demand, and I commit to, an ethical chorus of voices with them.

To keep a sliver of their intentions and personhood in this work, I've included short but in my mind necessary biographies of all these inspiring people in Appendix B. Not only are these biographies helpful in understanding the individuals in their own right, they are, I believe, necessary to understand the spirit in which I'm trying to write.

Third, last, and most unconventionally complicated: I begin this dissertation, and bridge between various chapters, using personal narrative. However, rather than just a story, these narratives are juxtaposed with a more interpretive story. I do this in the same physical space on the page by developing further on a method of parallel texts most commonly used in the publishing of interpreted works. In that discipline of translation practice, a book, originally

written in Greek or German for instance, has that original text on one side of the page and the interpreted text on the other side—giving readers the opportunity to view the original for its insights and perhaps questioning choices the interpreter may have made. In my use of the parallel texts I've placed a more raw, experiential narrative on the left side of the page, while placing a more interpretive narrative, often bringing in useful references and reflexive thought, on the right side of the page.

Perhaps a good way to explain this method is to give you a playful example. The layout of the parallel texts will resemble what you see below, though it will be much longer and obviously have different content.

<i>Jill, and I went up a hill to fetch a pail of water. I fell down and broke my crown and Jill came tumbling after. Up I got and home did trot as fast as I could caper; and went to bed and bound my head with vinegar and brown paper.</i>	At least in the 19th century it was more commonly known that water wasn't often found on top of hills. This was lost on me as I attempted to relive a fuzzy memory of a nursery past. Thankfully, my impulse to take a nap with a wrap made of vinegar and a brown lunch bag was well founded (Roberts, 2004, pp. 137-140).
---	---

On the left, in italics you have a "raw" narrative. It's likely to be infused with actions, reactions, and feelings so as to convey a drama or story as it was first perceived. On this left side I'll make every effort to keep my first-person voice central. On the right side in contrast, I've taken a more interpretive approach to the raw story. In these comments I may rethink my position, or bring in various voices to self-reflexively offer an interpretation of the raw story.

I'd suggest that as you read, you read the raw narrative first followed by the reflective/reflexive discussion. When later coming to read the right hand side, it's helpful, for me at least, to read back in the raw story to confer and remind myself of what I'm speaking about. That's part of the point of holding them side by side rather than keeping these readable

stories in a set and separate order in the written text. I regret and try to distance myself from what many autoethnographers try to do in blending these two ways of knowing and thinking into a semi-logical but ill-voiced prose.

In reading the parallel texts you can try out different options of course, like reading the reflective/reflexive, academically heavy, story first or if you're really talented you can try reading both at the same time, but in my experience jumping back and forth causes quite a bit of dissonance—which, in fact, is interesting in its own right. You might also notice your desire to switch from side to side, especially when keeping with the story in italics on the left. Maybe some academics who read this text will yearn for the academically analytical or interpretive far more than they care to admit. In many ways this text, even its formatting, is performative. Regardless, I hope your experience of reading these narrative bridges in the text is as fun as my experience of writing them. Overall, this use and reading of parallel texts allows me to be a storyteller first and foremost but disallows me from leaving my experience unexplored or unquestioned.

Furthermore, you may take note that each parallel text precedes a chapter that seeks to explore some point of crisis or curiosity embedded in the story. Taken together, these chapters One & Two, Three & Four, and Five & Six are diptychs portraying "A felt discomfort—in a narrative topography of engagement," "Moving toward dignity—to sustain stories of us," and "Telling different stories—of Epimetheus in daily life."

So, in sum, I use odd pronouns, inspiring muses, and parallel texts. Given these three eccentricities up front you might think this dissertation terribly onerous to read. I hope I can prove you wrong. I'm intending to write a pleasant dissertation for you to read. It's my challenge as a writer to make my curious style feel natural and inviting of your conversation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A FELT DISCOMFORT

*I grew up in a rather strange and loving family. To start, I have three sisters, and none of us share the same two parents. Let's just say I have an odd family tree. My parents separated when I was too young to know them as a couple. Throughout my childhood I travelled the back and forth of joint custody and became the bridge that to some extent kept my strange family talking to one another. I can recollect two times in my young adult life when we were all, my parents and my sisters, in the same room—once at my high school graduation and again at my return from the Peace Corps seven years later.*

*While my adolescence in Arkansas may have been somewhat strange, it was far from unhappy. My rather lazy school year spent with my mother was highlighted by weekends and summers of hard work in my father's carpentry business—along with the never-ending project of building our own home. We were rather poor*

Any psychologist would tell you that the experiences gained in one's childhood, along with one's interpretations of those experiences, have lasting effects on the psyche. In some ways proposing a more narrative approach to human psychology, Graham Swift (1983) offered that "man[sic]...is the storytelling animal. Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and trail-signs of stories" (p. 63). According to Swift these stories provide some type of psychological comfort as humans conduct their lives.

The story to the left, particularly how I frame my young childhood has been with me for quite some time. I can read a very similar version in course writings I presented four years ago to Scott Peters. In no small measure this story has provided me comfort in quite uncomfortable times. It has allowed me to negotiate my identity

*growing up, though we were privileged to live in HUD housing, with family, or rent-free in the second home of a family friend. Now both my parents enjoy nice homes, both self-built in fact. I'd say I learned a great deal about honest work and in general the art of doing right by people from my parents and the blessings they received or in turn passed on.*

*Perhaps it was this learning along with a naïve want to do right by others that brought me to the Peace Corps. Undoubtedly another influence was wanting to get out of Arkansas and have an adventure—after all I was 22-years old. I was also just fed up with all the pontificating at my undergraduate alma mater and wanted to get my hands dirty so to speak. Well, I did, for two years, but not in the way I thought.*

*I think many Peace Corps Volunteers have this vision of changing the world and starting amazing projects that “develop” their host country. More often I've learned that Peace Corps is a time where you find that your ability to build better relationships with folks, rather than better projects, is the key to any “success” as well as your sanity. Through relationships you can come to understand others, their interests and what they do, and how*

and my ethics with particular reference to felt “otherness” and “difference” in my daily life (Bhatia, 2011, p. 347; Kraus, 2006, p. 109).

Given the context that you will only read further in subsequent narrative bridges I can see how certain elements in this story bring me comfort and understanding around my positionality in development and engagement work in general. For instance, I've come to better understand my role and ability as a bridge builder in this work and consequently I highlight some potential roots of that identity in my upbringing between homes and my being the physical tie that binds a rather “strange” family.

I've also mentioned my upbringing in a working class family, though I've made note of my family's now more privileged homes. These elements of my identity have assisted me in navigating my current work with low-income families—letting me see how I might have shared some experience that their children now have, but have no personal experience raising a family in that environment. My mother and father have that experience but they aren't in a similar situation now. They are also white and heterosexual. There are a number of other instances in the narrative



*you might be helpful at most but at the very least, try to be more understanding.*

*I guess it was in the Peace Corps that I rediscovered as a young adult a bit of the ethic I grew up in. Doing right by people, a saying my family lives by, meant you had to understand somebody first, or at least try to. You had to know a person's history, and what they were passionate about, or at least be interested in learning about that. It helped if you could in some way understand what they're working through or know someone who does. This was what it took to do work with people in the right way.*

*There were things growing up in a poor community, in a poor state, that you might want to do, or intervene in, but sometimes it was best not to. Perhaps you just didn't know enough to be helpful and getting your nose in it wouldn't be the right thing to do just yet. Do some more thinking. Maybe you did know a bit of what was going on but other folks just weren't interested in listening. You wouldn't be doing right by having them resent you for shoving unwanted advice in their face. Be patient and keep thinking (or praying). My father, a very religious man, would quip Proverbs 15:23 "A word spoken in due season, how sweet it*

that contain tidbits of a negotiated identity.

I say negotiated as this is a dialogic or co-authored development of identity (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998). I have nurtured this story in light of a given audience and a current context. I acknowledge and celebrate that in another context I can and should revisit how I narrate my identity to enable certain (self)understandings and the opportunity to learn more about myself. I acknowledge the need to embrace what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as *mestiza consciousness*—which in my context I take to mean acting on the multiplicitous nature of my identity so I might build bridges—be a *nepantlera*, in the third space of engagement (Anzaldúa, 1996; Keating, 2006).

All of these concepts of identity influence how I then conceive of ethics through this story—or in the words of my family, “doing right by people.” Just as my concepts of identity are profoundly influenced by questions of context it's become clear in this setting that my ethics are also. Rather than building off a more Kantian, Utilitarian, or Consequentialist ethics my context-driven ethics here on the left bear much more resemblance to an Aristotelian or Foucauldian

is." I guess in that way the Peace Corps taught me to be a bit more humble and understanding, but I was still 24-years old mind you.

Coming back from the Peace Corps I eventually decided I wanted to go to school in this "development" work. In my mind I'd come to understand what this work entailed as far as building relationships and creating connections between folks and I wanted to learn how I might do that work better. I enrolled in a professional Master's program at Cornell University and in general I was really unimpressed by the overall development idea they were teaching. Development at Cornell was much more about macroeconomics and quick evidence-based program implementation. It just didn't fit with what I thought I understood about the work and what I was interested in doing.

I remember being in a development-centered agronomics class that felt a lot like middle school social studies. We were given a country, in sub-Saharan Africa of course, that was having trouble boosting export-oriented agricultural yields. We were to research the country's bioclimatic regions and cropping methods, maybe even some cultural traditions. We were to find a problem within that country's current agronomic

ethic. As Bent Flyvbjerg suggests these two, Foucault and Aristotle, largely correspond in seeing "reflexive thought [as] the most important 'intellectual virtue'" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 127).

Taking this ethic into how we work with people, and in what is to follow do research and academic writing, is central to how we begin to develop *phronetic* knowledge. Phronesis isn't scientific knowledge but rather "a sense of the ethically practical" (ibid, p. 57). Phronetic knowledge places emphasis on value laden, I would say people-centered, knowledge developed in context through deliberation. This knowledge is at once pragmatic, variable, and action-oriented. It's the kind of knowledge-ethics that nurtures relationships. My story positions me relearning these lessons through the Peace Corps as I acknowledge some of their roots in the wisdom of my family and my childhood home. What this story of identity and ethics adds up to is a very relational philosophy for doing work.

In my narrative I frame a conflict arising in my return to graduate school where "macroeconomics and quick evidence-based program implementation" take center stage. I recount a story of a classroom that left me feeling

*practice and propose solutions for addressing that problem. All of this mind you, from the safe and detached confines of a university library system and the ever-informative Internet.*

*I felt gross. Perhaps I was being too critical or sensitive—maybe this was just a game and I was taking it too seriously. But even then, a game has its purposes and what was this game trying to teach me about how you do development? I know it's quicker and easier to do a Google search for Uganda than it is to talk with someone from Uganda, or live in a Ugandan village for five years. It's hard to arrange a classroom around the latter. I understand the practical challenges of learning to do development cannot be met in a semester-long 3-credit hour course. That doesn't change how I felt about the class, or how I began to feel more and more marooned in my program.*

*Luckily I found people with other ideas, largely in the Department of Education, that nurtured in me an understanding of development I fit into. In the classrooms of Scott Peters, Butch Wilson, Sofia Villenas, and Terry Tucker I began to learn more about my own feelings of discomfort in other classes and where they might be coming from. I learned about adult education through Myles*

*“gross” and uncomfortable. The experience was isolating but it was also generative. As John Dewey notes, all thinking and inquiry starts with a felt difficulty—or in my words a felt discomfort.*

*Dewey (1910) says, an “undefined uneasiness and shock may come first, leading only later to [a] definite attempt to find out what is the matter”(p. 72).*

My journey to find out what was the matter, either with me or my course of study, began with relationships to people and ideas that helped me dig deeper into my feelings of displacement. My feelings encouraged me to seek other options, friends, and traditions I eventually found. There are links here to Freire(2000/1970) and critical consciousness as I began to read my world. To some extent I viscerally understood something but didn't have the literacy to explain it to others or explore it further.

When I mention adult education in the story at left, some of you may think I'm referring strictly to vocational training. Indeed that is a vein of study in adult education but more broadly the discipline hinges on both a pragmatic philosophy epitomized by John Dewey, and critical theory coming out of the Frankfurt School and in a more

*Horton, Paulo Freire, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Ivan Illich and bell hooks. I began to attach names and theories to my inklings.*

*After a summer of consulting work in Niger I made up my mind and decided that if I could find a way to study this adult education and development work more closely, I would. That next fall semester, in 2010, I applied to a PhD program in Adult and Extension Education.*

*As my application was going through, Cornell University disbanded the Department of Education. The small but close-knit group of students and teachers I'd come to call home were on the verge of liquidation. I wrote a letter to the new dean expressing my sentiments. Speaking for a group of friends I said that we weren't "grieving over the loss of the departmental edifice; we rather fear[ed] the loss of a forum" where each of us had found some space to develop as reflective practitioners. We organized a bit, we mourned a lot, and the department as I barely knew it was gone.*

*Though around the same time a university initiative, now called 'Engaged Cornell' began to take shape. A large endowment was being negotiated with a family trust interested in*

liberatory bent, explained through the pedagogical praxis of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich. Taken together, and in my reading, adult education is a life-long practice building on people's innate capacity to learn from their experience as they reflect upon it, ideally together, in free and supportive though critical environments. As Freire (1973) notes, adult education is founded "on faith in [people], on the belief that they not only can but should discuss the problems of their country, of their continent, the world, their work, [and] the problems of democracy itself(p. 33)."

This expert-eschewing, people-centered, and relational philosophy fit well with my own opinions about education and development. This much became quite clear during a consulting trip to Niger, and I signed up to learn more.

For others and I, the Department of Education at Cornell served as a type of enclave. Appreciatively, it allowed a certain level of camaraderie and support not found elsewhere in the university. To romanticize the department, it may have existed "as an island of achieved social change, a place where the revolution ha[d] actually happened, if only for a few, if only for a short time"(Day, 2005, p. 163). More critically, the

*establishing a center for “engaged learning and research” at Cornell. The opportunity was not lost on many of us who had called the Department of Education our home. As adult educators we did this “engagement” thing, and admittedly we considered ourselves as doing it rather well.*

*Though it became apparent soon enough that our little enclave of adult education had a very particular set of responses to what “engagement” meant. And it was only one voice in a larger chorus of engagement stories that were being shared around the founding of “Engaged Cornell.”*

*I was (and likely remain) a little bitter about the ironic demolition of a department of education at an institution of “higher” education-- and now armed with a book bag full of adult education tomes upon which I could thump, I made my way into the fray. I thought there was, or at least ought to be, a battle over what this “engagement” idea meant. There was a part for me to play in that.*

*I got angry and hotheaded. Let’s just say that what I lacked in tact, I tried to make up for in volume. Slowly, and still, a little voice popped in my head about that ethic I mentioned growing up in. Though it might be hard to stomach, doing right*

department may have generated unhealthy levels and types of cultural bias, with accompanying insularity, and philosophical hard-headedness (Low, 2008). In my mind, a combination of these perspectives, along with the monetary priorities of a university-cum-business led to the cutting of the department.

However, Cornell was in the midst of a global trend toward *engagement*. The publishing of Ernest Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered* and following institutionalization efforts through the Carnegie Commission and Campus Compact among others was and is resulting in a prodigious push for universities to reconsider their third-mission—that of service—more seriously.

At the outset of the *Engaged Cornell* initiative, I was rather involved. I narrate my story as a metaphorical battle. That metaphor may be an apt description. Real social struggle is bound up in the multiple accents and meanings of any word that is “alive” (Voloshinov, 1973/1929, p. 23). Engagement was and is definitely that.

This became more apparent upon leaving my enclave of adult education. I was sitting beside engineers, plant scientists, lawyers, and administrators who all had different meanings of

by people in this privileged environment still that word. They had different stories of required the ability to listen, to learn, and to engagement than I had. understand.

People held different stories of engagement position of feeling marooned; a position I than I did. Though it might be simpler to consider admittedly furthered by a hot anger. I didn't need myself right and they wrong, reality is always a to lose that anger(Lorde, 1981) but I needed to cool little more nuanced than that. Being useful here it down(Rogers, 1990). required a bit more thinking, feeling, and I had been anticipating engagement run understanding. Being useful required me to not amok. I was fearful, and anxious. Though realizing only understand where I stood and why, but have how blind I was to the larger arena I was in, I the courage to seek and understand others' stories stopped. For me, I came to a personal realization that differed from my own. that even here, in these privileged halls of academe, there was a right way and a wrong way for me to work with people.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IN A NARRATIVE TOPOGRAPHY OF ENGAGEMENT

*Inspired by Mary Parker Follett*

In the introduction to her work on *Creative Experience*, Mary Parker Follett (1924) describes a book she had read by a then-contemporary political theorist. In one sentence of this particular book she read, the author used the words power, purpose, freedom, and service in the space of three lines. Follett was struck by the realization that the author refrained from detailing what any of these words actually meant and consequently she didn't know. She repeatedly observed this pattern as she witnessed other "political scientists talk about conferring power without analyzing power; [or] economists talk about representation in industry without analyzing representation" (ibid, p. ix). Such hesitance to define or analyze what one is speaking of seemed most prevalent in certain "magic word[s] par excellence" (ibid, p. 139). These words were considered unequivocally good things that all people of virtuous conscience should aspire to. One such magic word in Follett's time was science. Other magic and poorly defined words of the time included social, power, function, and experience.

As Follett described, there was a type of crowd mentality in these magic words. According to her, organizing such a crowd required the rhetorical skill of "tak[ing] all the different aspects of a situation, about which men [*sic*] might and do differ, and either combin[ing] them into something so vague that all can easily agree, or else get[ting] them under the roof of a single emotion" (ibid., p. 22). Once a particular word moved into this realm of being vaguely agreeable enough or feeling good enough, people would start using it in a magical way where they believed they were talking about the same thing when in fact they were not.

One might think her goal as an academic in such a situation was to do away with this difference—come to some sense of surety on science, the social, or some other magic word. Perhaps it's the academic's job to be the definitive voice on a subject. She disagreed. The spirit of any academic investigation, including hers at the time, is “not to do away with difference but to do away with muddle”(ibid, p. 6). According to Follett, we aren't to do away with difference, but rather find ways of giving difference fair play. In Follett's opinion we could accomplish such a task by observing, in thousands of cases, the working of these words in the daily activities of our own, and others, lives.

I recount this story as an inspiration to me as I confront a “magic word” of our own time: *engagement*. At its most vaguely agreeable, engagement, otherwise known as community engagement, public engagement, or civic engagement is a testament to the good idea of citizen participation in the work of public institutions. As such, it's also fair to say that engagement is the moral or ideological equivalent of “eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you”(Arnstein, 1969, p. 216).

Given engagement's magic status in our current era, we'd do well to look at it more seriously, observing the thousands of cases where that word crops up in our daily life. That observation of our similarly named concrete actions is where we'll find difference, and give difference fair play. That's where we'll learn to better integrate our meanings, ideas of goodness, our many identities and actions with one another while exorcising our demons. Starting that project is the task of this chapter.

### **A growing archive**

Follett (1924) notes that we find difference, and give difference fair play “by watching in thousands of cases the working of [these magic words], by watching the behavior of men [*sic*]” (p. ix). Perhaps, for my project, it would be ideal to observe a thousand cases of engagement *in situ* as a participant observer. That project would surely span an entire career. In an effort to be both timely and informative I've begun looking at “thousands” of cases that have been



presenting themselves for some time. I've decided to take on a third-person exploration of extant literature in the growing field of engagement.

I say growing field of engagement both in the sense of practice and discourse, of which this chapter will focus primarily on the latter. There is a growing archive of printed material discussing engagement, the early history of which can be readily seen in the Google Ngram below. The developers of the Google Ngram discuss it as “culturomics” whereby social scientists and humanities scholars can highlight the rise and fall of cultural discourses through the corpus of published texts (Michel et al., 2011, p. 3). Below in Figure 1 I've combined the written concepts of community engagement, public, engagement, civic engagement, and university engagement, which together chart the rise of what I'll call engagement discourse in published work. This rise occurred during the early nineties roughly around the time Ernest Boyer(1990) wrote *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*.



Figure 1: The rise of engagement discourse 1960-2008

Linguistic changes captured by tools such as the Ngram have cultural roots(Michel et al., 2011, p. 3). These linguistic traces of culture, ebb and flow not only with changes in culture, but also with changes in the words we use to name facets of culture. To highlight this ebb and flow we can look at what some scholars (Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Nisker, Martin, Bluhm, & Daar, 2006) see as roughly synonymous with current engagement

discourse: citizen participation. In Figure 2 below we can see the rise and fall of citizen participation discourse alongside engagement discourse.



Figure 2: The movements of "citizen participation" and "engagement"

Citizen participation enjoyed a steady uptick in cultural presence beginning in the mid to late 60s, likely fueled by discourse and practice of urban renewal programs through the Johnson administration along with critique and dialogue in the realm of city planning (see Arnstein, 1969; Davidson, 1998). Citizen participation as a linguistic culture piqued in the mid to late 70s and then dropped from popularity in published vernacular. Meanwhile, engagement as a linguistic culture is currently on the rise. In the graphs above “engagement” may appear to be leveling out, however I suspect this is more a function of averaging as the current Ngram viewer only allows data up through a portion of 2008. A subjective analysis of the dozen or more articles I collect every week assures me that engagement as a linguistic trend, along with the cultural roots it names, is not going to be soon left behind.

However, as Mary Parker Follett would surely note, we must account for the fact that handy tools like the Ngram are largely a practice of sophisticated bean counting. This is okay, but it's also not enough. Poincaré(1910) said in his essay *The Future of Mathematics*, that “mathematics is the art of giving the same name to different things”(p. 83). Poincare encourages

this as a useful objective in mathematics as it gives ideas, which are inchoate though similar, a useful name in inquiry and practice. Likewise, citizen participation and engagement as linguistic markers with cultural roots can and do represent many different things but it's useful to consider them as a genre of like concepts so we can think about them more seriously. While Ngram or other quantitative analyses of literature can reveal certain elements of discourse such as trends and correlations, quantitative instruments are often too dull for interpreting the nuanced differences masked by the more singular names we give ideas.

Linguistically, what tools like the Ngram leave us with is a type of archive we must further explore. I'm not referring to archive in the traditional sense but rather in the Foucauldian sense. As Foucault (1972) uses the term archive he states,

*I do not mean the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity...[Rather] the archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities (pp. 145–146).*

Foucault's archeological method attempted to sketch the production and reproduction of multifaceted cultural archives like sexuality, madness, and the social sciences. For the present task I ask, how do discourses, or as I come to frame them, stories, of engagement shape, variegate, and discipline the conditions of inclusion within the archive of engagement? What kinds of stories are allowed in the archive of engagement and how do they position themselves as "talking about 'the same thing', by placing themselves at 'the same level' or at 'the same distance', by deploying 'the same conceptual field', [or] by opposing one another on 'the same

field of battle” (ibid, p. 142). The archive, in the sense of this research, is how and where stories become mapped on the “enunciative field” of engagement.

Foucault's task, as well as Mary Parker Follett's, when approached with a multi-faceted word or linguistic archive was to highlight "this dispersion that we are and make"(ibid, p. 148) or to explore the facets of a word about which people "might and do differ" (Follett, 1924, p. 22). By way of historical example, at the height of citizen participation practice and theory we can find in the archive sharp debates about what citizen participation actually meant. Some equated it with more efficient representative politics(Philadelphia City Hall, 1972), while others advocated its meaning as direct democracy and citizen control(Arnstein, 1969, 1972).

Currently there are differences in what is meant by engagement. Exploring these differences is an interpretive endeavor where one tries to usefully describe various meanings, “values,” and identities evoked by certain instances of engagement. It’s a common practice of codifying reality so its terrain may be understood more readily as one observes it. As a common practice, the work of codifying engagement has already been done from various perspectives and through various means (see Appendix D). While any of these taxonomic efforts have their own insights they also have their faults and dangers that my particular method seeks to avoid (see Appendix C).

### **A general model of engagement and some particular questions**

In spring of 2011 I helped moderate a panel discussing the meanings, purposes, and challenges of public engagement between universities and various communities. We ran far overtime with our discussion, only getting through half of our prepared questions, and we quickly turned the conversation over to audience questions. To be frank, I don’t remember any of the questions the audience posed—just this comment made at the outset by Kirby Edmonds, Program Coordinator for the Dorothy Cotton Institute and advocate for social justice and economic opportunity in the local Ithaca community. He said, “the thought of universities engaging communities terrifies me...When I think of engagement I think of two things: marriage

and warfare.” At this, the room forced a slight chuckle—I assume because they fancied the two synonymous. But I gathered in Edmonds’ voice the potential and history of these relationships being more the latter than the former.

Later in the fall of 2012, I was present at another such response to engagement. Marta Vega, Executive Director and Founder of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute in New York City spoke on an introductory panel at the national conference for *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life*. She said, “I want to speak about *inquietudes*. *Inquietudes* are things that make you feel uneasy. Because we all generally agree on what we feel good about, but we don’t all generally agree on where we feel uneasy. And I am increasingly feeling uneasy about the use of [the word] community. [As in] Community engagement.”

She went on to say how “some people were using the term community like we were, for minorities—communities of color, poor communities, disadvantaged communities, marginalized communities. But some people are not seeing themselves as part of community. And we are all part of community...[but]what communities are valued in this country?” She continued to question what kind of knowledge is preferenced in this country. Why don’t we consider our community-based and cultural organizations to be “institutions of higher education?” How do we see them lacking? She noted that what often happens is that this knowledge coming from institutions like her own is “appropriated and coopted by higher education to develop a whole series of programs across the country, that see the foundation of the academic thrust still as ‘the other,’ still as going to community. There is something fundamentally wrong with that structure”(see Vega, 2012).

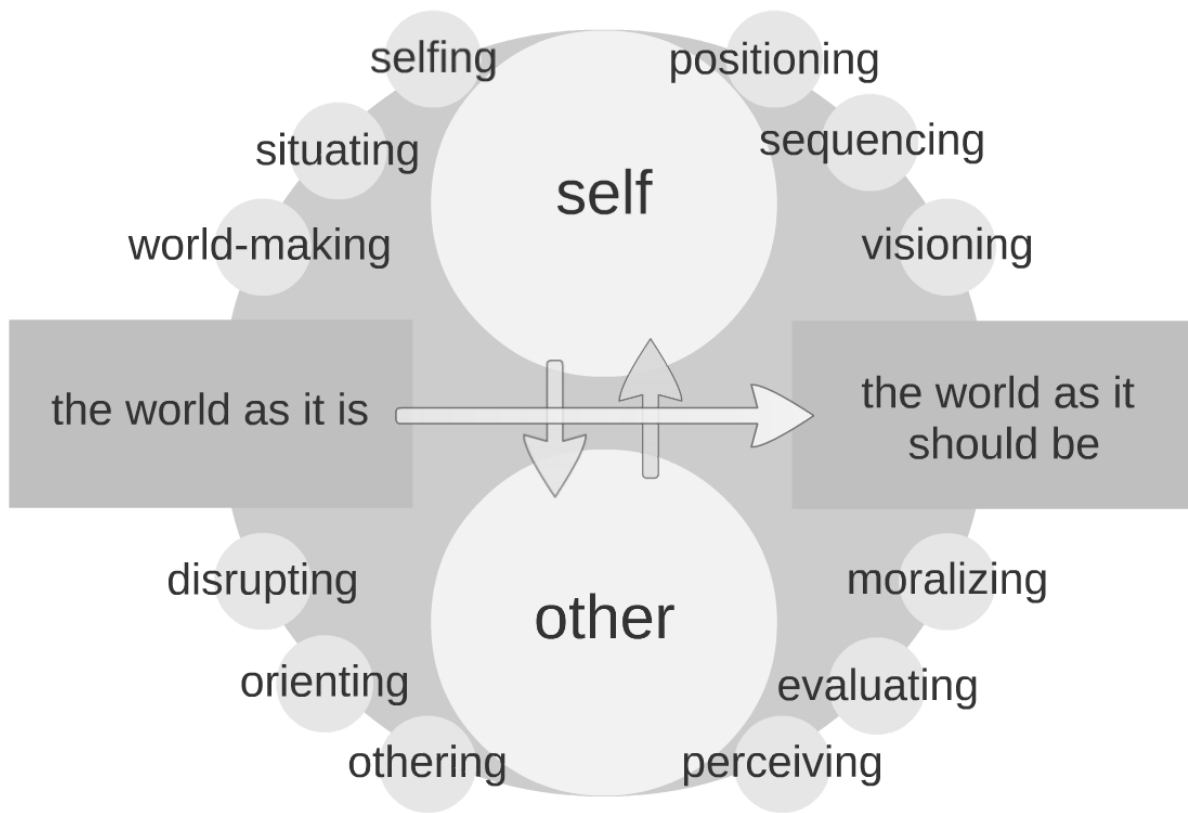
Of particular interest in the stories above, I find a great emphasis on identity and what is or isn't shared, forced upon another, or coopted, between selves and others in the course of change. I want to bring the two voices above to bear on my current project of doing away with muddle among the many different engagements we are a part of. For me, a helpful task is to at least propose a broad general framework for seeing engagement wherein a great diversity of

stories might fit. Taking a cue from Kirby Edmonds, this ought to be a framework where both (happy) marriage and (unjust) warfare can be explored, and where their differences might become more legible.

In creating this broad framework, I'm keen to look at these questions of identity Edmonds and Vega both bring up. I'm also interested in looking at particular framings of the world as it is, and the world as it should be--along with any attendant theory of change.

In combing through large amounts of literature and practice I've come to see engagement, at it's most general, as a discursive construction between "selves" and "others" as they attempt to change some perspective of "the world as it is," into "the world as it should be." Around these interactions of identity and perspective we can interpret a number of storied actions: worldmaking, disrupting, orienting, positioning, sequencing, visioning, and more. Taken all together these various settings, plots, and character developments can show us rather nuanced and quite different stories of engagement. These discursive constructs can also clue us in to some of the limits within current engagement practice. I've represented the relationships of these storied factors in the figure below. In the online portal you can interact with this figure, viewing definitions and examples of terms I'll be using throughout the text. In this writing, I've included definitions and examples of the terms in the glossary appended to the text. I encourage you to take the time and look through those definitions.

the story model of engagement.



**Figure 3: The story model of engagement**

The above framework makes sense to me as I turn my interest to particular questions. I'm interested in how people establish their own roles and identities, and the roles and identities of others. How do they frame the world as it is and as it should be? How do they plan to bridge the two? What resources, deficiencies, capacities, and aspirations converge in different stories? There are differences in how people respond to these questions in reference to their daily lives, their work, or their institutions and, in heeding the words of Edmonds and Vega, these differences matter a great deal.

One sliver of this difference can be seen in the large archive of peer-reviewed literature describing the efforts of public institutions to engage people. It's not the only place we can find difference, but it's a start. Equipped with this general framework above and in search of responses to these particular questions I intend to explore that archive further.

## Developing a story-based and meta-interpretive cartography

So far I've just stated what for me is an obvious fact—that the growing archive of engagement is full of disparate meanings, purposes, identities, and values. I've gone on to describe some attempts to make these differences more apparent and outlined some values my own attempt will attend to in Appendix D and Appendix C respectively. There I've outlined some of the *what* and *why* of my project. I've covered what is of concern, and why I want to go about exploring it in certain ways to achieve various understandings. In the section just preceding this one I've begun to outline a bit of the *how*. There I've detailed one step in how you can begin to explore difference is to propose the most general model for viewing all or most of the cases at hand. It helps to highlight certain facets of difference that are particularly important, but also might present unnecessary limits. Equipped with this most general model and methodology I'm now going to turn to specific "nuts and bolts" issues of method.

Most simply, I first gathered a large number of descriptive case stories of engagement that represent very diverse characters, plots, crises, and resolutions. I'm interested in mapping stories that are commonly being told by large public institutions like universities, governments, and non-profits. Consequently I've corralled data from the more institutionally sanctioned arena of peer-reviewed literature.

After gathering this particular archive and sifting it for full and descriptive case stories I've approached each article with an iterative method of interpretation. I've combined my background in discourse analysis, and thematic narrative interpretation with the more systematic attributes of meta-ethnography and meta-interpretation to develop a type of narrative cartography. With this method I keep a particular eye to questions of identity, and various roles certain characters play. I also interpret how authors story the world as it is, and how they foresee the world as it should be. Other points of narrative interest include the so-called plot of an engagement story, a particular story's theory of change, or how characters interact in order to bring about certain objectives.



I've covered these points in more detail in Appendix C. This rigorous process intends to highlight difference between various stories of engagement that are present in the literature. Realistically speaking there are thousands of individual engagement stories. However, there are also patterns to these stories that present the author, others, and the world in different roles and conditions. As Francesca Polletta (2006) says, "the fact that we can isolate narratives in discourse and can isolate different versions of the same narrative makes it possible to trace the careers of particular stories" (p. 7). This story-based and meta-interpretive effort builds a transparent, useful, and flexible method for exploring the careers of very different engagements. Ultimately, it also works to uncover some of the unnecessary limits of our engagement stories.

### **The storied terrain of engagement**

The engagement stories you're about to read aren't real—they're fictional. However, they've been crafted to resemble stories that do exist in real literature and discourse. Each of these stories is precipitant from my close reading of a number of articles that seem to be telling a similar story of engagement. I found six particular stories that bear mention within the total of 75 articles that I brought through the method described in Appendix C. These individual stories each build on similar worldviews, they have similar characters, in similar roles, they contain similar actions, and similar morals. While the result is fiction, the resemblance these stories bear to words and actions of actual institutions, people, and events is completely intentional.

For each section you'll see a short story that describes a particular engagement. They're all set in the fictional town of Springville, complete with various government departments, neighborhoods, and Moreland College—characters abound. Collectively these represent a host of perspectives. I've struggled to keep these stories brief and compact while remaining true to the actual sources I draw from. After each short story, you'll see a table where I've pulled one exemplary quote for each of the twelve narrative moves from the articles included in this interpretation. If you read these sections on the interactive website you can view many more direct quotes situated in an interactive diagram of the story model of engagement. Please feel

free in this text to refer back to the definitions of these twelve narrative moves in the appended glossary.

At the end of each story, and after the table, I've included a small discussion--pulling in a few resources and perspectives to interpret these stories further. Online I've posed some general questions to readers as well as question my own position. I'm hoping to promote further discussion of these ideas, which sadly we cannot accomplish in this static text--once again further conversation can be had on the online platform. Ideally these engagement short stories, with or without my limited analysis, can serve as valuable discussion resources for small groups interested in reassessing their own stories. Ideally they can help us move beyond these stories in creative ways. In addition to a pedagogical outcome this chapter, in a sense, replaces a traditional literature review with a broad overview of engagement stories. I hope to raise more questions than answers--laying out a broader research agenda through which we might consider taking the scholarship of engagement more critically and more seriously. Eventually I hope to publish articles based on each individual story. These will be addressed to a more particular audience and co-authored with critical colleagues.

For now, in this reading, consider these stories and my brief interpretation as the start to a much longer conversation. If you want to join in, look on these stories and accompanying quotes intensely with your own eyes and attempt to read between the lines. Why are certain characters positioned in certain ways? Why does an authorial voice frame a discussion of evaluation or process as they do? How do authors attempt to orient us to certain problems? Anyone can do critical reading and have a conversation about what they see. I've included my voice in these, through these, and after these stories but I intend to illicit your own voice that's needed in the conversation as well. I recommend you read each story and then take a small break. Reading these compendious explanations back-to-back-to-back is rather disorienting. If you read these six stories all at once you might come away with the sense that these stories are just ships passing in the night. Their collective plots might seem disjointed--the stories seem to not speak with one another. Together their voices sound like bedlam. That's absolutely right.

Engagement looks quite different through everyone's eyes. This challenges our hopes of conversation. This chapter is one way to start, acknowledging we can't speak about engagement with one another without acknowledging the many stories that we variously associate with that label. While each story may seem tidy in its own narrative package, looking between these stories highlights unspoken contradictions and assumptions. I take up some of these critical points in the short discussions and I subsequently investigate and challenge these assumptions and contradictions in Chapters Four and Six. Further, I believe we must openly discuss these assumptions and contradictions within our own institutions and communities. So again, with an intent to raise some of your own questions for this conversation please read these slowly, and one-by-one. Interpret each story in its own world before we discuss the broad implications of considering engagement as a whole. Take notes in the margins of the printed text or discuss your thoughts in the online platform.

#### *Engagement as evidence-based intervention*

*The Smith Center for Engaged Research at Moreland College began with a recognition that despite an ample base of practical research at the college, there was little impact on the local community of Springville. Among the more sobering statistics: Springville has far above average unemployment, rates for diabetes and heart disease are among the highest in the state, and 5-year high-school graduation rates have slipped well below their highpoint in 2006. Many organizations in the local community work to alleviate disparities in these problem areas but have had poor rates of success. An obvious disconnect exists as the problems surrounding employment, health, and education are central to the academic base of Moreland. The Smith Center exists to bring university knowledge to bear on these societal problems by developing rigorous, evidence-based programs that support community engagement in these social systems.*

*One program developed by the Smith Center in cooperation with the Department of Health is "Vida Saludable" which caters to the community's growing Latin American population. Health disparities, including indicators from diabetes to infant and maternal health, are readily quantifiable among these populations. Furthermore, interventions that target these communities aren't always culturally appropriate. Over the course of two years, the Smith Center in partnership with the Department of Nutritional Sciences adapted several common evidence-based health interventions for use by organizations in the local Latino/a community.*

*Randomized-controlled trials with these populations assured that these program adaptations maintained their efficacy in practice. One particular program catering to maternal health maintained an 85% retention rate over 8 months and 97% efficacy in promoting prompt early-childhood immunizations (up from 82% in the general Latin American population). Evaluation of participants pointed to areas in the program in need of further improvement but 90% of questionnaire respondents reported the intervention as "very impactful" on their perinatal experience. Many specifically noted enjoying the opportunity to discuss different experiences of motherhood with one another.*

*Over the past ten years of its existence the Smith Center has had many similar success stories, and has developed a solid reputation for building and adapting programs that achieve efficient results in the local community. Funding support for the center has doubled in the past five years as funders recognize the value that evidence-based research and programming can provide to local organizations. While the Smith Center maintains excellence in the disciplines of health, employment, and K-12 education we see a much broader reach for the future as programs begin to take on new challenges in areas such as natural resource management, non-formal education, and international development.*

**Table 1: Engagement as evidence-based intervention**

Worldmaking	North Carolina has three medical schools ranked in the top 50 best schools in the nation, the second-highest-ranked public health school in the country, and 27 different nursing programs. Still, the Commonwealth Fund recently ranked North Carolina 30th in the country in terms of health care cost, quality, access, and efficiency; only 46% of adults with diabetes in North Carolina have received needed preventive care, and the hospitalization rate for children with asthma is 196.1 per 100,000 children— three times the rate of the top-ranked state" (Michener et al., 2008, p. 408).
Disrupting	"Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino /Hispanic population in Connecticut grew by 50.3 percent, with Latinos becoming the state's largest minority group. Connecticut Latinos experience the highest poverty rates among all ethnic groups. According to the 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Latinos in Connecticut were substantially less likely to have health care coverage compared to whites and blacks. Latinos living in Connecticut are twice as likely as whites to report their health as "fair" or "poor." In particular, Latinos in Connecticut are heavily affected by type 2 diabetes and its risk factors, including obesity, poor diet, physical inactivity, and smoking" (Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2008, p. 171).
Situating	"Given that an emancipatory approach [to community engaged research] often assumes the need for consciousness raising amongst marginalized groups to identify problems, the researcher in this tradition may more actively seek out groups with whom to partner, take the lead role, and introduce certain forms of intervention (e.g., [evidence-based programs] EBPs) that may be otherwise unknown to collaborators. On the other hand, in the case of a community organization soliciting partnership with a researcher, the researcher may be compelled to take a more pragmatic approach to helping the group work toward their pre-identified goals. In this arrangement, the researcher may suggest the adoption of EBPs but may have to negotiate their use, especially if the partner community is skeptical of their validity"(Nation, Bess, Voight, Perkins, & Juarez, 2011, p. 90).
Orienting	"Community partnered research and engagement strategies are gaining recognition as innovative approaches to improving local healthcare systems and reducing health disparities in underserved communities of low income, historically disadvantaged minority populations. These strategies may have particular relevance for mental health interventions in these communities in which there often is great stigma and silence surrounding conditions such as depression and difficulty in implementing improved access and quality of care" (Mendel, Ngo, Dixon, & Stockdale, 2011, p. 79).
Selfing	"Researchers and physicians at academic health centers (AHCs)—including Duke University Medical Center and Health System—are often viewed as the vanguards of innovation, testing creative solutions to reduce suffering and save lives. And, in most respects, they are" (Michener et al., 2008, p. 408).

Othering	"Designing culturally appropriate intervention programs requires cultural sensitivity, taking into account the ethnic/ cultural characteristics of the target population"(Bender, Clark, & Gahagan, 2014, p. 2).
Positioning	"Equal partnership is intended to encourage two-way capacity development as academic partners increase their ability to work in and adapt interventions to community settings and community partners enhance their skills at analyzing and applying research findings to solve problems that affect their communities" (Nation et al., 2011, p. 94).
Perceiving	"CPIC study leaders highlighted that all agencies—regardless of the intervention condition into which they were to be randomized—will receive benefits: "Everybody will get something...You will have a lot of resources. It is not a study where some get stuff, others don't" (Mendel et al., 2011, p. 85).
Sequencing	"Although these methods differ in specifics, they all describe stages of the selection and adaptation process, including conducting community needs assessments, choosing an EBI to be modified, identifying differences between the population for which the EBI was designed and the new target population, deciding what to change about the EBI in response to these differences, and pilot testing the adapted program with diverse stakeholders (e.g., prospective participants, practitioners, and community partners)" (Chen, Reid, Parker, & Pillemer, 2013, p. 75).
Evaluating	"A recent systematic review of interventions to improve PA among African Americans found culturally adapted interventions had higher participant satisfaction, engagement, and retention rates compared with nonculturally adapted interventions. Cultural modifications applied to Vida Saludable may have influenced high levels of satisfaction demonstrated by the excellent participant retention and program completion rate of 77%" (Bender et al., 2014, pp. 5–6).
Visioning	"In the future, CEHDL will continue expanding and diversifying its funding portfolio, which is critical for its long-term sustainability. These efforts will continue to provide experiential learning opportunities to students throughout the state and beyond, thus strengthening the academy and community partners" (Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2008, p. 176).
Moralizing	"Therefore, despite the contributions of existing programs, there remains a gap in the literature with regard to the development of fatherhood programs that not only engage in parenting skill development and outcome driven data collection, but also engage fathers at a level that affirms and celebrates who they are as men and fathers"(A. R. Perry, 2011, pp. 17–18).

As with subsequent stories, I'll finish my interpretation with a general sketch of the main assumptions and general plot but I'll begin by reviewing some of the more curious narrative moves in each story. To begin here, "Engagement as evidence based intervention" follows a rather well trod storyline throughout history. It starts with a vision of "the world as it

is" that is quite commonplace in rhetoric. The world is full of many problems. Consequently, worldmaking and disrupting are rather conflated in these stories—and indeed that's the case in many storylines of engagement. In this story in particular, these problems often present themselves through statistics—the author illuminating many gaps within and across sectors of the population. See the above quotes from Michener, et al., and Perez-Escamilla, et al that cite statistics around diabetes, obesity, asthma, smoking, etc. The world as it should be, is often only implied as a future world where these problems shouldn't exist. Few people, and even fewer institutions would disagree with this setup.

Where this story widely differentiates itself is in the process it supports for moving the world from point A to point B. The phrase "evidence-based" as it's been described, "seems at once warranted, welcome, and slightly platitudinous"(Archibald, 2014, p. 1). After all, who would advocate for people doing this or that without some defensible evidence as to why? But "evidence-based" in this story means something quite specific—we can see this much in textual markers like "randomized controlled trials," "target populations," and "efficacy." For those unfamiliar with the scientific method, these randomized controlled trials involve the establishment of experimental proof of an intervention's success or failure. Often one group of people receives a certain treatment while others go without, or they receive some other widely accepted treatment. The goal being, to prove in effect that a certain action guarantees a certain result within an acceptable limit.

One of the largest consequences of this story is that it structures a rather stark delineation of the characters. You'll see in the story above and the accompanying direct quotes that the "other" in this story is the proprietor, or holder of some sort of problem. They also have certain characteristics, like culture, that present some challenges to experimental design. The "self" in this story is the provider of some sort of solution to the disrupting element in the story. The "self" in this story possesses something needed to solve the crisis—in this case it's the ability to provide a certain kind of knowledge as well as other resources that the "other" is, at least for the moment, lacking. For instance, a protagonist may be devising or may have devised a

statistically effective educational program that can mitigate certain harmful effects of diabetes that you or your community might suffer from.

To paint a rather cartoonish (and somewhat acerbic) storyboard, the protagonist in this story is a scientist considering the world a living laboratory. Using various means the protagonist devises an intervention into the world system that directly solves a particular problem within a measureable rate of success. This is what engagement means in this story-- effective and efficient problem solving through scientific trials. However well intentioned, this protagonist wears a lab coat underneath his or her jeans. This sets him or her apart from, if not above, other characters in the story, who in a quasi-medical model are a scientist's patients in need of fixing. Success is achieved when a more expertly derived intervention reaches its goal of curing some sickness within a target community.

The history of this storyline is very old but it gained momentum as "engagement" throughout the mid 90s as the process to create evidence-based medicine expanded to include evidence-based healthcare, evidence-based behavior change programming, and evidence-based education, among others. There remains a growing trend in scholarship around, and funding support for, evidence-based intervention as mentioned in the story and accompanying quotes. It is a very widely told engagement story, and it's one that is popularly believed in certain disciplines and journals—though there is ample dissent regarding how this story considers what counts as knowledge, the way it "others" people as intervention targets, and the way it positions the expert's role in society(see Hammersley, 2013 for further discussion).

As always I've left this story somewhat undigested to welcome discussion. I encourage you to visit the online portal and discuss your initial thoughts on it. Do you have any personal experience with this storyline that you could offer?

Also, what are the roots of this particular narration of the self (problem solver) and the other (problem haver)? Are these just spoken conventions in institutional language or are they rooted in something more?



I appreciate that more and more authors of this story are acknowledging differences in culture as important. But can a largely scientific enterprise accept culture for something beyond a complication in RCTs?

Please visit the online version of the text and contribute your thoughts. I promise to respond to your comments or questions. Also, please take a moment to digest this story in and of itself before moving on to the next. Respond to the questions above if you want, or pose others. Grab a tea or coffee if you like before moving on.

#### *Engagement as catalyzing conversation*

*I've lived in Springville for the past two years working as a junior professor in the Fine Arts Department at Moreland College. In addition to my more professional duties I became quickly involved in a community gardening initiative: Growing Places. A year and a half ago I was invited along with a small contingent from Growing Places to participate in a workshop on systemic racism facilitated by the Springville Multicultural Center (SMC). While I have studied theatrical interpretations of race and racism in my own discipline of American Theater, my participation in this workshop as a white, middle-aged, female gardener was a definite shift.*

*During the workshop, various community organizations, local elected officials, university departments, and business owners were confronted with sobering statistics that revealed systemic racism in the local community. From issues of food access, to effects of historic planning decisions, to graduation rates at the local high school, and the number of minority-owned businesses it seemed like all of us in the room were somehow complicit in this racial inequality--and furthermore we had some power to change that dynamic in our community. At the end of this intense information session, led by local leaders of color, small discussions were organized to propose next steps. I stepped into my more professional role and offered the possibility of arranging a small Theater of the*

*Oppressed style Forum Theater on the issues of systemic racism that were highlighted. The goal being to foster discussion that would lead to some concrete actions in local government, businesses, and non-for-profits.*

*In discussion after the workshop it was apparent that local organizers were hesitant to trust a white, upper-middle-class newcomer with such an important dialogue. Various concerns and timelines effectively tabled the Forum Theater idea for six months. During this time I began working more closely with the Springville Multicultural Center. Eight months ago the steering committee put their seal of approval on the project that would ultimately involve a graduate student and myself interviewing local citizens, organizations, and elected officials about racial dynamics they had witnessed in the local community.*

*Over four months of interviews preceded the presentation of the Forum Theater. This interview process involved a lot of tension, that was perhaps productive, between myself and many citizens living in the Westside neighborhood (a low-income community of color). Negotiating the role of this creative piece in amplifying the voice of this local community required a constant process of building rapport across difference. The project had to truly model a commitment that local communities of color had valuable insight into the problems facing our community, and could offer ways we might go about resolving them. Bearing this commitment alongside my professional role in theater was uncomfortable but productive.*

*In the end my graduate student and I, in collaboration with the SMC steering committee, developed four scenes depicting typical and everyday experiences that our community faces with systemic racism. All of these were particularly geared toward public institutions. The format of Forum Theater allowed, even required, the audience (largely similar to the first workshop) to take an active role in resolving these everyday dilemmas.*

*Giving elected officials and interview participants the same situations to respond to facilitated lively discussion as the audience deliberated courses of action to take with each scene.*

*At the end of the workshop we maintained an open floor for participants to express their thoughts about the experience. A number expressed their gratitude and noted a new kind of permission they felt to talk about these systemic issues they'd experienced for some time. A local low-level public official noted his excitement around the number of actionable solutions brought out by the forum. Yet a couple members of the steering committee critically approached the Forum as potentially just another venue for local officials and business owners to appease communities they saw as "squeaky wheels."*

*While the overall impression of the forum was positive and productive it remains to be seen how local practice will change if at all. In fact given the capacity of the SMC that assessment may never come. Still and all, the experience has helped to reframe my personal and professional identity in my new home.*

**Table 2: Engagement as catalyzing conversation**

Worldmaking	"Our training course arose in the context of efforts to make public engagement a central mission in the UK public research system, and a growing sense that 'dialogue' has to be part of this. The emphasis on public engagement has come from concerns to strengthen public accountability around government-funded research, to maximise its relevance and uptake. In the case of scientific research, there have also been concerns about low levels of scientific literacy, often linked to a loss of public trust in scientists. The earlier (from the 1980s) emphasis on fostering public understanding of science was strongly criticised by social scientists for its 'deficit model' of one-way communication. The public engagement agenda took a more constructive path, by encouraging researchers to engage publics in two-way communication – hence the interest in dialogue in science. But 'dialogue' also has relevance in other policy-related fields where the language of knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement is more commonplace." (Escobar, et al., 2014, p. 87-88)
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Disrupting	<p>“Although this win-win approach is desirable, in practice, community engagement is a challenge. Time is a precious resource, and despite the availability of specific tools, asset-mapping requires considerable planning, and the expertise among community citizens, associations and the voluntary sector needs to be recognised and fully integrated into mapping exercises. Furthermore, asset-mapping sessions need to be inclusive to ensure invited participants from the community can fully participate. This poses a challenge when power differentials exist between participants, and the format of the sessions require people to compete for ‘air-time’” (O’Sullivan, Corneil, Kuziemy, &amp; Toal-Sullivan, 2014, p. 2).</p>
Situating	<p>"Key stakeholders were CPS clients (birth families, youth in care, foster care alumni, kinship families); foster and adoptive families; policymakers and their staffs; CPS staff; community-based organizations; faith-based communities; state human services systems; law enforcement; city, county, and state resources; foundations and funders (local, state, and national); private industry; community advocates, advisory council on minority adoptions, and service providers" (J. James, Green, Rodriguez, &amp; Fong, 2008, pp. 281–282).</p>
Orienting	<p>"Multimedia offer ways of addressing this dilemma through critical reflection on the politics of voice, a reflection which asks, at the start as well as throughout a project, who is speaking, who is spoken of, and who is listening" (Sandercock &amp; Attili, 2010, p. 28).</p>
Selfing	<p>"The respondents perceived me, a Jewish university professor, as a representative of the program. I therefore enlisted the help of Bedouin research assistants for the purpose of conducting focus groups. The research assistants explained that the group activity was not part of the actual program and that its goal was to hear people’s genuine opinions, including their criticism, so that the program could be improved. The fact that such criticism was voiced and that we encountered a plurality of opinions was a positive indication" (Raz, 2003, p. 455).</p>
Othering	<p>"In addressing disproportionality, the Texas public child welfare system seeks community partners who have decision authority, the ability to commit resources, and leverage investments designed to ensure sustainability. Particular attention is given to how community partners are “enrolled” while regional and local advisory committee members assist by bringing others “to the table” and engage in a gap-identification process to determine who is missing and what agencies, organizations, or individuals need to be present"(J. James et al., 2008, pp. 289–290).</p>

Positioning	<p>"Extended dialogue needs to occur around the following questions: What's in it for those whose story is being told? What do they hope to get out of it? Will the project be designed in such a way as to ensure their needs are likely to be realized? What control will they have over how their interviews are used? How will they be consulted or involved throughout the production and post-production process? Will authorship be shared? Will ownership of the multimedia product be shared, including any potential profits? What's in it for the researchers/ producers? Will there be an ongoing relationship after the production is finished? What are the action components of the project? Is the researcher prepared to acknowledge the gift of this story, and what can she or he offer in return?" (Sandercock &amp; Attali, 2010, p. 28).</p>
Perceiving	<p>"During the SIM sessions, it was clear that the level of comfort, common understanding and willingness to engage in subsequent collaborative activities were more pronounced as the day progressed, and on the basis of the findings from this process evaluation, most participants left the sessions with a feeling they had personally benefited from their engagement in the process" (O'Sullivan et al., 2014, p. 10).</p>
Sequencing	<p>"I was requested to help CNH in their writing of grant proposals during a time when the provincial government were cutting their funding for social programmes. I was subsequently asked by the Executive Director whether there were ways in which the university might be able to offer further assistance. Through a series of conversations with Paula Carr the idea emerged of a university–community collaboration, in which I would use the resources of my new multimedia laboratory to make a film telling the CNH story. Our thinking was that a well-crafted story could appeal to funders and government agencies in a more emotionally powerful way than standard documents such as annual reports (which by definition are rather dry, statistics-based documents whose primary purpose is to account for how funds are spent)" (Sandercock &amp; Attali, 2010, p. 29).</p>
Evaluating	<p>"In trying to step back from the process and provide constructive criticism, I take the point of view of my professional field, namely social anthropology. A geneticist or a psychologist would probably evaluate this program differently. The process described here is important because it engaged relevant groups in the community and empowered them to reflect on and discuss an intervention program that was offered to them by the authorities. Such a bottom–up process of community engagement is very important in complementing the top–down health and educational intervention. The success of this bottom–up process is measured by its potential to elicit genuine and representative voices from the community, and feed them back into the program in a way that makes a difference. In our case, the views elicited in the focus groups were presented to teachers and used to frame the discussion that followed the film when shown at school" (Raz, 2003, p. 456).</p>

Visioning	"Stimulating discussion amongst researchers and the general public about the wider implications of the research not only allows the public to become accustomed to what is possible in terms of future robotics, but also allows them to contribute to the debate around desirable, as well as undesirable, research directions. Engaging the public can also benefit the researcher, through exposing them to diverse perspectives from outside the university" (Rocks, Jenkins, Studley, & McGoran, 2009, p. 428).
Moralizing	"When people are engaged in activities that affect their communities and the organisations they are involved with, they have a stronger sense of coherence and belonging, which contributes to connectedness at community and organisational levels" (O'Sullivan et al., 2014, p. 2).

The story above, and the examples it pulls from, is unique for a few reasons. First, the story positions "selves" and "others" in a rather complicated dance in which each plays a nuanced and vital role. The role of the self, as you see above in the narrative and example quotes, is often a negotiated role where the self has a more reflexive reading of their identity in light of working with a given community. Additionally, others are positioned as agents that must necessarily contribute to a needed conversation. Second, in "engagement as catalyzing conversation" there's a fair amount of perceiving language that infuses the text with an essential narrative quality. Both in informing (to be covered later), and evidence-based intervention stories we see a lack of this perceiving language as these texts spend more time describing facts than they do narrating experience. In the current story we see how this perceptive voice also plays an evaluative role. Let's briefly explore these two facets further before discussing the general storyline.

In the positioning acts of these stories we often find a more agentive role that others play. While others are still often depicted as experiencing the brunt of a disruptive force, this story positions that identity as having the power to not only name and frame the problem but also play a greater role in defining how a disrupting force might be quelled. For instance in the positioning move from Sandercock & Attili (2010), we see attention to "whose story is being told...what do they hope to get out of it...what control will they have over how their interviews are used...will they be consulted or involved", etc (p. 28). Granted, in this story, the "how" of

moving from Point A to Point B often coalesces around the need to discuss more systemic issues across different perspectives--and that decision seems to come with varying amounts of input from others. In turn, the self-positioning acts are highly reflexive, by this I mean that selves don't only reflect on their own identity, but selves further explore how their identity might be perceived by others and how that perception may change their way of working in a community that's often not their own. Look to the selfing point above. What these positioning acts accomplish is the narrative framing of selves and others on more equal footing. At least rhetorically, both are approaching a conversation with certain perspectives (biases) and often, differing identities. These stories often frame the necessity for a fruitful communicative space between these perspectives that often results in some characters, particularly others, having greater authority to speak about a specific issue—having experienced that issue first hand. It's a humanizing move rhetorically, and in practice it's quite complex to achieve. These storytellers amply narrate that complexity.

The second unique characteristic of these stories is how characters, particularly selves, approach complexity. There's a preponderance of perceiving speech in these narratives. Authors quite often focus on their feelings and their interpretations of others' feelings to navigate and evaluate communicative space. I'm sure we all know someone who facilitates communicative spaces well. I've often noted how a few of these folks feel the room or even explicitly call for "temperature checks" during a given conversation. The real-time nature of this perceptive evaluation forms a narrative backbone to many of these stories. This stands in contrast to the more regimented assessment and evaluation protocols we see at the beginning and end of highly structured programs or interventions.

To storyboard this narrative we can see the protagonist coming from any number of places with an underlying assumption that a certain topic, be it problem-based, area-based, or identity-based, is not being amply discussed. While statistics might confirm this issue, it is also, often, a felt issue. This sets the protagonist along with various others into a plot of attempting to have a conversation that a great many of them might be ill prepared to have. From there the

storyline can go any number of different directions, from more regimented deliberative forums, to naïve “can’t we just get along” sessions, or, as the crafted story above shows, popular theater production. These stories end up succeeding and/or failing in unique ways. However there seems to be an ethical charge within these stories that seeks for everyone to get along. Having been both a camp counselor and residential assistant, at times I’ve placed myself in this role of convening a necessary conversation. Perhaps the protagonist is placing himself or herself in the role of a hospitable convener.

Ultimately, I enjoy these stories. They have all the parts of a good story. And they're definitely not fairytales. They have full characters, events that you didn’t fully expect, and the ending isn’t guaranteed. Yet, I also see why these stories are not well heard or listened to in the current environment. Admittedly these stories moralize a vision of society that's been longstanding. Democracy is precipitant of a conversation among more equal people—these stories hark of the agora. However, in the current environment, where the expertly crafted interventions of the new public management may take precedent, these stories fail to hold sway. Their evaluations, being perceptive, bear little measurable proof of their efficacy. For instance it would be hard to measure how much less racist the participants in the above narrative were after the forum theater exercise. Often the problems or goals in these stories are so systemic and longstanding that they aren't easily amenable to three-year project timelines. Lastly, these stories, being so very context-based and/or centered in notions of identity, don't lend themselves to generalization and scale. They require a different support structure which current institutions aren't necessarily built for. These critiques raise a number of normative questions for engagement in general, and for this story in particular. Largest among them, what is the role of politics in engagement? Especially, when stories such as these amplify particular voices.

I'll pause my interpretation here and leave you with some questions that I'm curious about.



First and foremost, I'm not a good critic of these stories since most of my experience and schooling is appreciative of this engagement as catalyzing conversation. That being said I know these stories can be rightly accused of being overly romantic and (overtly) political. What are some other viable critiques of this story that you've come across?

One point of note, it seems that these stories, as rhetoric in the current engagement environment, have an Achilles heel when it comes to proving (or arguing) their success. Honestly I can see how appending a "more rigorous" assessment of these communicative events might be necessary in the current environment but might seem out-of-place or hackneyed in the eyes of authors. How have people approached this dilemma as it refers to typical funding reports, especially those that may come from larger and more official structures such as the NIH, USDA, or NSF? If you advocate for speaking in different registers for funding reports and peer-reviewed articles will these stories have any interdisciplinary impact as it relates to institutions?

As these stories are so individualized, any attempt at generalization may fall flat on its face. I recognize there are valid arguments that say such un-generalizable work shouldn't be supported by certain institutions. Some might offer best practices, but I'd imagine many authors would see even that promise as a bit of a stretch. So, that being said, what values do these stories offer to those outside the direct experience? A cynic might say, "Yeah, great story. So what?"

Knowing many folks who work in this vein of engagement I've been at many commiseration sessions where lack of funding becomes and remains the chief topic. A big question is should we expect funding from large structures for this very place-based work? A second question that I've rarely heard fully discussed, is what alternative support schemes might be necessary for this work to be more prevalent?

Lastly, here's a big one. Amplifying the voices of certain communities is not only a political move in general it's also risky when it pertains to vulnerable communities. It can backfire in ways that further isolate and disenfranchise already marginalized and minoritized

communities. Either from this fearful position or the frustrated position of having had these types of conversations time and time again to no effect, many communities don't want to participate in more conversations. What are some of the roots of this dynamic, and how might they be addressed?

I'd encourage you again to visit the website and leave your thoughts along with any helpful stories or resources that we might want to incorporate in our thinking. As always, I'll give my own two cents in response to your comments or questions. Take a pause before jumping into the next story and pose some question of your own.

#### *Engagement as data gathering*

*Community engagement has always been a central challenge of city planning departments. Planning, as a discipline and practice can oftentimes be a top-down, expert-driven enterprise. These departments are often portrayed as out of touch with local, on-the-ground realities. Yet with the rise of Web 2.0, alongside time-tested means of gauging community needs and aspirations, planning departments can become more responsive and representative public offices. In this spirit, Springville Planning Department has recently piloted a crowd-sourced data platform for revitalizing its long-neglected Waterfront District.*

*Since the mid-60s, the Waterfront District has been plagued by poor infrastructure, lack of capital investment, and a declining residential base. Two years ago, sensing an opportunity for creative repurposing, the city planning department developed a survey instrument to engage local businesses and residents about perceived needs and aspirations for the local district. Training and using local residents as data collectors and doorknockers in this process proved to have a very positive impact on the quantity and quality of the data collected. These initial assessments were analyzed by academic partners at Moreland College. With this data, taken together with various new*

*development plans before the planning department, students at Moreland students spent one semester creating 5 separate "master-plan" concepts for the repurposed Waterfront District. The plans were presented by a team of planners, students, and academic partners at two community meetings geared toward gathering more data on community opinions and thoughts.*

*While many business-owners attended these meetings, very few local residents were present. In light of this dilemma the research partners decided to create an online web-platform for gauging local residents' opinions on the plans. The online format allowed netizens from across Springville (and beyond) to interact with high-definition renderings of various plans as well as videos of the team presentations. Visitors to the website were encouraged to leave feedback in the comment section of each page. Halfway through the website's 3-month timeline, visitors were prompted to fill out a questionnaire and asked to vote on various aspects of the plans.*

*Encouraging recruitment and retention of website visitors remained a constant message from the planning department and included a full-length editorial in Springville Weekly. Here again, local advocates for the initiative proved to be a valuable resource for promoting the website. However, despite best efforts, input through the website was somewhat less than expected. Still and all, mixed-method analysis of the data collected, along with data from the preliminary interviews and presentation feedback, provided a rich data store for city planners as they move toward guiding and approving several new development plans. This long-term community engagement work and the listening it requires will undoubtedly help alleviate some of the backlash that planning departments can face from citizens who feel they haven't been heard. The project has been successful enough that the planning department is considering a more permanent venue to showcase and gain input on area planning initiatives. While generational differences may continue to affect online participation in broad-based planning the authors are confident*

*that paired with robust and time-tested assessment techniques these methods of community engagement can support a democratic culture in city planning.*

**Table 3: Engagement as data gathering**

Worldmaking	“The increase of environmental issues and constraints, the world-wide financial crisis and the numerous interactions of the transportation system with the social and economic contexts mean that strategic transportation planning is now more than ever a fundamental support to a rational and sustainable development of the territorial system and of the transportation system itself” (de Luca, 2014, p. 110).
Disrupting	“The dominant use of new technologies is increasing the use of online media in both the public and private sector, changing patterns, relations and hierarchies of traditional processes in favor of more democratic participation. This “information explosion”[...]refers to the need and the opportunity to examine the subjective iterative content of the expert planning process: a maximum level of interaction in the new plans surprisingly seems to correspond to a maximum level of personal involvement and self-reflection” (Garau, 2012, p. 593).
Situating	“Health and demographic surveillance systems (HDSS) are dynamic or open cohorts based on a regular, longitudinal surveillance of the entire population within a defined geographic location. Subject to consent, all residents are enrolled, and sequentially, all new immigrants and births to the designated area are recruited into the cohort during periodic updates of the census” (Allotey, et al., 2014, p. 2).
Orienting	“We specified and calibrated a multiple criteria decision analysis (MCDA) approach based on the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) framework that could be used to measure and include the public's perceptions and wishes in several stages of the strategic planning process” (de Luca, 2014, p. 111).
Selfing	“As the primary mission of the project is to undertake research, the extent to which the project can devote resources to development per se is limited. Although HIV is recognized as a key health and development problem affecting this disadvantaged population, there has been no systematic attempt to identify with the community their development priorities, for example through participatory appraisal (Rifkin 1996). The extent to which the scope of the project can or should be widened from a focus on HIV research to a broad development agenda remains an open question” (Nakibinge, et al., 2009, p. 194).

Othering	<p>“The CECs have formalized terms of reference and office bearers and take the responsibility very seriously. The CECs meet every 2 months and exchange information with SEACO staff about pending activities, and any problems or opportunities identified in the community that will enhance the SEACO research. The CECs have played an active role in priming the community for upcoming data collection rounds, and have provided advice to SEACO staff about strategies to enhance participation either by being more selective about the time of day a household is approached, or the most appropriate person to approach within a household...Some CEC members also play a ‘door knocker’ role; they accompany data collectors to particular households when the data collector is not known to the community and therefore is able to provide an introduction. This role is carried out on an ad hoc basis and the more mature data collectors rarely call on this resource....A further example of a role played by the CEC is the management of negative rumors and misinformation that occurred in one of the villages” (Allotey, et al., 2014, p. 6).</p>
Positioning	<p>“An early decision was made to devolve aspects of community engagement to the community members themselves. As part of the early consultation process, community members were asked to volunteer to coordinate activities and events that would bring people together and provide the opportunity for open dialogue about SEACO, its objectives and potential benefits to the community ahead of any data collection” (Allotey, et al., 2014, p. 6).</p>
Perceiving	<p>“Traditional healers, such as the izangoma (diviners) and izinyanga (healers), were reluctant to speak with researchers possibly because they feel that they are in competition with the mainstream medical establishment. Both parents and clinicians laughed when asked whether parents consult the healers when they have a child with the symptoms of ASD. The discomfort was in large part because of embarrassment about the persistence of traditional beliefs in a modern context, and parents admitted only after considerable prodding that they did seek the assistance of traditional healers, if only because their parents and grandparents insisted on it” (Grinker, et al., 2012, p. 206-207).</p>
Sequencing	<p>“The participatory process of the DP started in 2008 and ended in June 2009 with the shared adoption of strategies of the Plan. Many participatory tools were put into place in order to involve the different groups in the area (surveys, public meetings, information activities, stand leaflets, online forums, thematic groups). These varied depending on the different steps and design stages...Thereafter they proceeded with the production of informative material about the construction of the detailed plan based on the elaboration of the preliminary tables. At this stage citizens could be informed on proposals being analyzed through the online platform. Subsequently, after the first draft of the DP by the technicians in collaboration with the Planning office, citizens were given the opportunity to submit further views and criticisms, through blogs, forums, newsgroups and discussion lists. In this way they were actually involved in the participatory process, working together with the technicians on preparing intervention strategies” (Garau, 2012, p. 599).</p>
Evaluating	<p>“The most concrete outcome for us, of a successful community engagement process for the SEACO platform, was the recruitment and retention of at least 80% of the population within the selected mukim” (Allotey, et al., 2014, p. 4).</p>

Visioning	“Thus, its use is to support “rational decisions”, to make the best decisions for the different targets, enabling decision makers to reach the decision that best fulfills the multitude of targets, allowing the measurement and synthesis of the multitude of factors or criteria. Finally the AHP responds to the need for a rigorous, retraceable and unbiased methodology” (de Luca, 2014, p. 113).
Moralizing	“Who knows if in the future we will end up with procedures which allow us to govern the territory electronically. As some authors have theorized, it will certainly require a radical change in bureaucratic thinking” (Garau, 2012, p. 601-602).

Engagement as data gathering builds on a concern that we all feel. It springs from a place of not knowing what we ought to be doing. However, rather than an individual's story, this narrative is almost exclusively institutional. More often than not these stories come from public institutions, or publicly oriented disciplines, that have gained a reputation for not listening to the publics they're supposed to serve. With a lack of regular communication these public-oriented institutions can be rightly accused of being under-informed and "top-down" as they go about their professional work. In the above narrative I've highlighted a planning department. From selected quotes in the table above you can notice other narratives from settings like public health, among others. These stories have a number of things in common. First among them: when faced with the dilemma of not knowing what to do, they posit the necessity of gathering more or better data from the publics they intend to serve.

These narratives cover a broad range of topics and hit varying depths of citizen participation so I encourage you to read through the quotes on the online-interactive diagram which spur the preliminary interpretation you'll see here. I'd like to focus on three aspects of this story (selfing, othering, and visioning) before asking some more pointed questions for discussion.

First, as opposed to engagement as informing (covered later), engagement as data gathering explicitly locates the disrupting situation within an out-of-touch or under-informed self. The protagonist of this story has a certain blind spot in reference to the particular population of interest. I've represented this dynamic in the narrative above and you'll notice in

this example and accompanying quotes evidence for two concerns. First, I've already noted this self doesn't refer to an individual, but rather an institution or discipline writ-large—the disrupting force is positioned as a disciplinary or professional blind-side. Consequently there is very little focus on the individual identities of selves in the story. Unless these affect data gathering there is rarely a note on race, class, nationality, or place of residence. While these factors may influence data collecting methods, they are rarely dwelt on as roots of a self's out-of-touch-ness. This not only raises a question of personal culpability and responsibility but also personal agency. The structuring of the self in these stories as an institutionalized and professionalized self orients the disrupting force in a rather limited way, which gives rise to the second concern in regards to selves.

Even if you grant that locating the disrupting force in an institutional self is appropriate, I'm shocked that these stories don't dwell on the roots of this institutional ignorance more. Most of these data collecting stories, while introducing the problematized self early in the narrative, quickly shed this past self in favor of what I'll call a visionary self. The institutional self of yore is discarded and given relatively little airtime in comparison to the newly empowered self that will exist post-data gathering. I'd be interested to hear, in this story, what created the out-of-touch self. I know that's a different story, or an unabridged version of a similar one, but it needs to be told and heard in my opinion.

Second, citing the rise of public engagement, these stories posit new ways of working with others. Consequently we find a number of new roles that others play. I'd encourage you to revisit the quote in the diagram above beside "othering." The citizen as "co-researchers" is often used to describe a useful data collecting role that citizens play in these projects, in addition to being "door-knockers," advocates, and dispellers of bad rumors. These new roles feature heavily in evaluating language as institutional selves attribute much of their success to citizen support in recruitment and data-collecting efforts. One thing that must be explored in this dynamic is the difference between working with others, and having others work for you. The politics of that exploration is a depth these authors rarely go to.

Third, I'll just briefly touch on the visioning language of these stories. I've already noted that the visionary self rises throughout this narrative as a more responsive and representative public institution through data gathering. That vision of a more rational and data-driven society has its roots in modern statecraft and it's become ever more prevalent in circles enamored by the rise of online platforms and big data. I find the visioning and moralizing language of this narrative to be rather telling and troubling as a popular educator and romantic believer in direct democracy. This story seems to envision the construction of a digital public—a place where accountability and accounting are assumed synonymous.

In positing a role for public institutions as constant and intensive information-gatherers this story begins to paint the protagonist as a kind of data programmer. This protagonist can use various metrics to understand the public through collected data ranging from census records, tax records, survey data, and in depth case studies. I'm curious about the range of academic/professional distance various protagonists have toward "the public" and how that affects their approach to getting a grasp on the qualities of this "other," this community they're studying. What does it mean to understand the public or "crack the code" in this type of engagement? Would there ever be enough data on enough variables to "govern the territory electronically," as Garau (2012, p. ) states?

I'm aware that I may be engaging in hyperbole. I know we can't talk about the ethics of data gathering without acknowledging the difference between a data hoarder, who may keep this information behind lock and key, and a data curator who may consider public access to and deliberation around particular data to be of primary importance. This is a discussion that we must keep going in our hyperconnected world. We'd also do well to think of the implications of this story alongside the rise of big data and domestic surveillance.

It may be obvious from the above that I have some real issues with this story. There are two ways I've heard others defensively qualify these critiques above. They posit that 1) data gathering is better than not doing anything at all, and/or 2) data intensive-methods of governing are inherent in politics of scale and unavoidable in a globalized and data-driven



world. I still have questions about these defenses because on both counts these voices may be spot on.

Would better and more frequent data gathering alone support a more democratic culture in public institutions? Or to a lesser extent might it be a viable stopgap on the road to a more organic cohesion?

Is this visionary self a useful rhetoric for prefiguring a different kind of politics in this or other stories? Does it (have to) come at the expense of neglecting history and individual responsibility? Please take your time to leave thoughts in the online forum before moving on to the fourth story below.

#### *Engagement as negotiating knowledges*

*Southside Springville has long been considered a population at-risk. As such they've repeatedly been positioned as a "target community" for planned intervention by state and local actors, not least of which by Moreland College. As a senior faculty member in the School of Social Work I've only recently come to reconsider this positioning of the community and renegotiate my role as an action researcher in a Southside-initiated project for violence prevention.*

*My involvement in the project followed a chance meeting with Maria Jones, the Program Director at Southside Center. I'd recently been to a faculty development initiative around engaged research and Maria had recently attended a training on CBPR offered by the Praxis Project. The Southside Center had been awarded some public safety funds to offer programs in violence prevention and Maria wanted to use these funds as an opportunity for community-based research, or as we came to prefer, action research. Acknowledging my background in more traditional research, I was keen to see how I might be of use in the project.*

*The project began as a study group around Violence in Southside that involved 14 citizens including myself and Maria. What became very clear from our first four meetings was a necessarily sharp departure from the common notion of violence prevention as traditionally perceived in social work. While domestic violence and gang violence are common in Southside, traditional programs have failed to involve citizens in researching the roots of these issues in structural violence. After these first four meetings our small group proposed the ambitious project of co-researching the roots of structural violence in Southside as well as its effects.*

*After much deliberation, at which I uncomfortably took a backseat, we decided to take on a historical treatment of the question as well as develop a mixed-method survey instrument for local parents. I say I was uncomfortable as a self-identified expert in research methodology. It was a struggle to hold my tongue in reference to how a particular method may fail certain tests of scientific rigor, local applicability, and impact in policy circles. It was a struggle to balance my view of external validity with a concept of internal validity in Southside. The research project took much longer than expected but the resulting report and community discussions generated substantial interest and spirited conversations.*

*What remains to be seen is how this research will yield further action. As Maria acknowledges, amplifying community voice is an action in and of itself but there is a need to sustain the discussion to a point of further action.*

*A consistent thread throughout the research involved us renegotiating our identities as researchers and citizens, which was both uncomfortable and productive. Through the privilege of my senior status I've become largely unfettered by the structures of academic advancement and now see more fully how academic structure can impede some of the*

*work I've come to see as so valuable. I hope to continue in this unfinished work for years to come--committing to a relationship of mutual trust and dignity in my community.*

**Table 4: Engagement as negotiating knowledges**

Worldmaking	<p>"The conventional approach to poverty practiced at universities around the country defines poverty as an economic problem that can be corrected through the corporate sector creating more jobs and higher incomes, thus enabling an expansion of the middle class; however, history shows that such solutions have offered little help to the long-term resolution of the problem. Despite the many trillions spent on poverty programs over the last fifty years, more than one in ten people in the United States remain officially poor; this in the greatest wealth-producing engine ever created in human history" (Yapa, 2009, p. 133).</p>
Disrupting	<p>"'East Kirkland' had emerged as a bureaucratic construct with little meaning for the community with which it was required to engage and whose health it purported to improve. SIP boundaries were contested by local people who pointed to areas of deprivation excluded from this initiative. 'Community' proved a potentially misleading term, as most local people identified with their own neighbourhood, but sharp divisions existed between age and sectarian groups across the broader area. Some people held hostile attitudes to others within their own neighbourhood (e.g. 'kill all the junkies')" (Carlisle, 2010, p. 122).</p>
Situating	<p>"Like other contributors to this special issue, we will argue that psychologists need to understand research evaluation issues with reference to the notion of "impact validity." To make the case, we draw on our experiences as researchers in the field of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Psychology in the United Kingdom; a field which seeks to positively impact the overlap between psychological knowledge and practice on the one hand, and the lived experience of sexual and gender minorities on the other" (Hagger-Johnson, et al., 2013, p. 665).</p>
Orienting	<p>"Agre asserts that design involves: selective amplification of things we value. Within every community is a force toward a higher level of community life. A community needs a shared identity, a collective memory, a repertoire of ways of doing things together, familiar genres of communication, ways of moving along from newcomer to oldtimer, places and landmarks, rituals, a language and a songbook" (Tamminga &amp; De Ciantis, 2012, p. 130).</p>

Selfing	<p>“The THP is a private, nonprofit, social justice organization led by survivors of abuse. Our CCP includes a diverse array of community members, researchers and students. Primary partners include the THP and faculty and students in the University of Oregon Counseling Psychology and Human Services Department (CPHS). This mutually beneficial relationship is extensive, including, for example, many hundreds of CPHS students who volunteer hours devoted to the THP and THP influence on CPHS curriculum, including in particular an undergraduate prevention of violence course and a masters-level program for Couples and Family therapists. Our partnership assumes that in order to reduce and ultimately end abuse and violence we must (a) change the social conditions that promote and sustain violence and (b) provide direct attention and support for healing from trauma and oppression” (Cortez, et al., 2011, p. 134).</p>
Othering	<p>“In doing so, the partnership essentially redefined traditional roles, thereby enacting what Small (1996) has described: “Pursuing a collaborative relationship redefines the research relationship from one of ‘expert’ and ‘learner’ or ‘researcher’ and ‘participant’ to one of two partners developing a shared agenda. Citizens are no longer merely the objects of study, but partners in the process of defining the research. As a result, local citizens come to see themselves not merely as recipients of research knowledge, but as partners in the process of acquiring knowledge” (Frabutt, et al., 2003, p. 113).</p>
Positioning	<p>“At other times though, a tension between the pursuit of truth and a commitment to justice can arise. In our project, injured workers hoped to discover data consistent with their own personal experiences. Some injured workers acknowledged that this desire colored the way that they collected, interpreted, and reported on data. Some interviewers found it hard to refrain from telling their own stories and perhaps leading interviewees to respond in kind. Likewise, document group researchers found it hard simply to report what they read without searching out and emphasizing themes that coincided with their own personal experiences” (Polanyi &amp; Cockburn, 2003, p. 23).</p>
Perceiving	<p><i>“When I was invited to the conference last year, it was like entering a new world. Here I was, among people who have been in the same situation... All of a sudden things seemed to be clearer and I seemed to fit in and learn and contribute. I was treated with respect and consideration and that was a big part of my healing process at the time”</i> (participant quote, Polanyi &amp; Cockburn, 2003, p. 20-21).</p>
Sequencing	<p>“The first stage in charting this new mission is to actually recognize the social obligation involved. The second is to create a vision of the democratic cosmopolitan civic university, and the third is to clarify the current strengths and weaknesses of both the academic and community sectors” (Gaffikin &amp; Morrissey, 2008, p. 101).</p>

Evaluating	“Locally, a cooperative spirit has been the hallmark of the collaborative’s efforts, evidenced by such practical matters as monthly planning meetings hosted by the police department and jointly facilitated by the High Point chief of police and the director of CSSI. Local clergy, school principals, service providers, and juvenile justice representatives have come together despite differing institutional climates, diverse cultural contexts, and different ways of defining the problem and possible solutions” (MacKinnon-Lewis & Frabutt, 2001, p. 71).
Visioning	“In essence, this innovative model is concerned to transform the relationship between town and gown in the generation and application of knowledge. Traditional and simplistic dichotomies between the ‘experiential’ knowledge of community and ‘formal’ knowledge of the academy are dissolved. In its place, a new synthesis of how both partners can compose, exchange and use knowledge is developed” (Gaffikin & Morrissey, 2008, p. 102).
Moralizing	“The relationship between the university and the community in Rethinking Urban Poverty rests in shared expertise and shared agency. We argue that the historic knowledge produced by universities focused on economic growth ultimately served as a causative agent of poverty because it prevented us from looking elsewhere for creative solutions. Working in partnership with the community, we were able to transcend the limits of that approach and produce a different kind of understanding of ‘the poor’” (Yapa, 2009, p. 137).

I have two disclaimers before I start. One, the fictitious story above is rather rosy-- however a good number of the stories included in the table above and the interpretation below are far more complicated. It's difficult to do these complications justice in a short story so I'd encourage you to read some of the direct quotes around "disrupting," "positioning," and "perceiving" in the figure online. Two, this story most closely resembles how I like to see my own work. However as you'll see I have some informed worry regarding this story as well. Regardless you'd do well to interpret what I say here while knowing that I often support this story in my own work.

In this short discussion I'd like to delve further into three aspects of the narrative: the messy placement of the disrupting force, the narration of selves-in-development, and the visionary other. However to preface I'd just like to note the most noticeable trend common to these stories is the positioning of others throughout the research sequence. The stories presented in the table above position selves and others as co-researchers in a process of change. This is an idealized position that is difficult to achieve in practice and most stories in this genre

are quite up front about that. Building on theories and practices of (participatory) action research (PAR/AR), community based participatory research (CBPR), and activist scholarship, these stories foreground the role of politics in research and intend to democratize that process through inclusion of, and accountability to, a given community. I'll return to this difference as I bring up some critical questions I have regarding this story. I've only briefly touched on the subject here because in many ways this story is founded more heavily on three narrative "moves" the story makes regarding selves and others, and their respective positionalities in reference to the issue at hand. Without these three critical moves, a story could include "others" as co-researchers to a much different end.

How this story positions the disrupting force is unique. The simplest way to characterize this is through a metaphor of mess. The world is a terribly beautiful interconnected mess that we're all implicated in. Rather than thinking of others, or selves as the sole proprietors of a problem, authors go to great lengths to position sources of the problem amid a network of actors. In reference to the classic "self" of engagement narratives, these authors often self-deprecate in reference to their institution or discipline as can be pointedly seen above in examples from Yapa (2009) and Atterton & Thompson (2010). While the effects of a certain social issue may be most readily felt or measured in a certain community, the root causes of that issue lie in a network of actors, not least of which the authors themselves. This messy story of a networked problem invites a messy and networked orientation to its resolution that is often iconoclastic. In Yapa (2009) for instance we see the positioning of academic concepts of "poverty" to be a chief contributor to poverty's intractable nature in certain communities. Likewise we see the disruption of "community" in Carlisle (2010), "development" in Atterton & Thompson (2010), "knowledge transfer" in Hagger-Johnson, et al.(2013), and in the fictitious example above I've disrupted the concept of "violence." In some ways the positioning of the problem is at once a classic academic move, and a Twainian truism: "What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know. It's what we know for sure that just ain't so." However in this story,

the resolution of such a taken-for-granted-problem can't be pursued alone, or from armchairs, hence the next two narrative moves.

The self of this story is what I'd like to call a self-in-development. The disrupting force in the story brings a question of identity into sharp relief for both the self and how they consider others. If anything, selves position themselves in this story in a facilitative learning role. To complicate this role, the learning capacity of selves is often limited by institutional structures that constrain intra- and inter-institutional linkages and necessary relational work (see "selfing" and "positioning" above). This puts the self in a mode of identity development which can also carry the mantle of institutional change. In the academy at least, a metaphor that might be helpful is that of an Academics Anonymous wherein a problem is identified in the self and, given the nature of the issue at hand, one is powerless to solve it alone.

This admission alongside the positioning of the disrupting element requires a more agentive role for others in this story. Others are named co-researcher, colleague, etc. in an effort to replace or perhaps only renegotiate the classic markers of "target communities" and the "intervened." However there's a wide amount of variation in stories regarding if and how "others" take up this more agentive role. Often it's an ideal or visionary other that we see presented in these stories. While other engagement stories can dwell on problem-inundated others this story appreciatively positions others as collaborative agents—perhaps to a fault. First, this vision of others may not correlate with others' self-concept. For instance, "co-researcher" may be an academic carry-over rather than an apt narration of another's perceived role or aspiration in more democratic work. Second, an overbearing focus on others' capacity may downplay real limits to their participation. Regardless of these complications we're left with a positioning of the other as integral to the resolution of the issue and at least in part the (re)education of the authorial/institutional self.

Unsurprisingly there are countless complications in these stories as selves and others come to negotiate their process, their knowledges, and their new and old positionalities to address (structural) issues. We see these complications throughout the sequencing language as

authors envision and perceptively evaluate selves and others collaborating in the research. Rarely, if ever do these stories meet the idealized nature of their rhetoric. The space between what is, and what should be, while perhaps lessened, remains unfinished work. I see the protagonist in these stories taking on a prophetic role. Perhaps it's more along the lines of a disciple, spreading the "good news" that we all are or can be researchers. In weaving certain traditions of popular scholarship she or he is a disciple of some sort, proclaiming faith in our ability to reach some slice of salvation through negotiating our knowledges and affirming the power of agency through our research. Of course, a robust story in this vein may question commonly held notions of research as well.

In closing with some critical questions, I want to point out that this storyline has very serious issues in regard to its underlying philosophy, politics, and ethics.

A central claim of this story is that academic/institutional structures often position "others" in the wrong way. These stories express a discomfort regarding how others are positioned as target communities or to put it simply, problem-havers. There are a number of philosophical positions that can add support to such a claim. To name four in particular, these stories can pull philosophical genealogies from Pragmatism, Marxism, Anarchism, and Poststructuralism. I'll focus on the first two, Pragmatism and Marxism, in my critical questions below because 1) they by-and-large inform the two broad historical genealogies of this work, and 2) though from quite different philosophical schools, they present similar challenges in practice.

As mentioned above the story of negotiating knowledges places others in more agentive roles. Pragmatism can support this move by pointing out that knowledge, quite often, comes from lived experience. To not include others in the naming, framing, and solving of a certain issue is doomed to failure because the knowledge of disconnected outsiders is insufficient. Marxism, especially the Marxism of mid-20th century South and Central America, claims that status quo approaches to knowledge and power are not only insufficient to solve problems, but actually these approaches support hierarchical class structure and the many divisions between



the haves and have nots. Marxism calls for a vanguard intellectualism or alternatively an organic intellectualism which both require a certain commitment to a particular class of people in the production of liberatory knowledge. In either case, we have the positioning of specific others (those with particular lived experience, or class/cultural positions of oppression) in somewhat privileged positions of knowledge *vis a vis* the issue at hand, at least in theory.

A critique of the philosophies informing this story can point out how they respond to the hierarchical dichotomy of knower and known, intervener and intervened, by trying to flip them over. It's an overt political move with populist roots that can give, and has given, rise to a different brand of revolutionary, separatist, and/or supremacist oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 56-57). Unsurprisingly quite powerful institutions often resist this explicitly non-neutral position. Aside from this external political consequence some of the internal practical consequences this story may run into, include a certain idealized claiming of "*the* grassroots," a homogenized reading of "*the* community," and a romantic narrating of "*the* work."

These are some dilemmas that give me concern regarding this story and how it informs my own. I'll be burrowing further into these throughout the dissertation however I'd like to pose some question here that we can discuss further.

The work of negotiating knowledges bears some resemblance to the practice of community organizing which you could debate is not the role of government, managerial, or academic institutions. The most basic question then is, should this story be given space and support inside these structures? Why or why not? Would these institutions adopting the role of community organizer, or facilitative learner, adulterate the political programs that the practices of community organizing has arisen from?

How might anarchism or poststructuralism respond to some of the critiques I've placed above—particularly to the privileging of certain communities? What modes of power do pragmatist and Marxist ideologies assume that may be less useful in a postmodern political terrain?

Does this story's (appreciative) vision of others as researchers reflect others' visions of themselves? What about healers, fighters, jokers, music makers, and gardeners? If there's a disconnect between how others are idealized in this engagement narrative and how individuals see themselves? How might this disconnect be explained or explored?

Please leave further questions and comments online and I'll be sure to leave my thoughts as well. Take a moment, before moving on, to think how this story might fit or might not fit within your work and life.

### *Engagement as informing*

*In the past decade, both the NIH and the NSF have redoubled efforts to encourage scientists' engagement with the public. The necessity to engage the public has been especially felt in the field of genetics. Over the past twenty years, research contributing to such initiatives as the Human Genome Project, and the advent of genetically modified organisms, has largely failed to engage the public in productive ways. Evidence for this disconnect can be seen in the decline of public funds for basic research. Over the past five years in particular, legislation at the state and national levels has been passed that reflects a public ill-informed of genetics. Furthermore, subsequent efforts by scientists to inform the public indicate how little experts understand about interacting with the public at large.*

*Seeing public engagement to be a necessary skill of future genetics researchers, the genetics graduate program at Moreland College began holding a semester-long practicum in Public Engagement with Science. The end goal of this practicum was for graduate students to organize a research showcase and discussion that engaged the public with their particular research projects and crosscutting issues in the field of genetics. In practice this required students as aspiring researchers, to effectively communicate the*

*public import of their research, to understand publics as multifaceted groups, and to address issues of concern that flood popular media.*

*In addition to weekly readings in science communication, students were required to focus group their public dialogue questions and informational posters with one another and finally with small groups of citizens in Springville. This pre-assessment encouraged many students to reframe their presentation before the final public event which we came to call the Springville Genetics Short Course (SGSC).*

*At the SGSC public participants were invited to contribute answers to an informal quiz during the orienting presentation. This orientation was followed by two 90-minute breakout electives chosen from 10 graduate student offerings. Finally crosscutting questions formed the backbone of lunch-table discussions that were recorded by graduate student participants for later in-class discussions. In wrapping up the 5-hour short course, participants were once again invited to take part in an informal quiz focused on the process and public impact of genetics research. Appended to this quiz was an evaluation of the short course itself.*

*Over 90% of the 40 participants in the short course reported that they felt more informed about genetic science through participation in the short course. A wide majority of participants who took the pre-test showed marked improvement in their genetics knowledge after the short-course. Ninety-five percent of attendees rated the experience as "very enjoyable"--many citing the rare chance most citizens have to engage directly with scientists. Students likewise enjoyed the project and through two subsequent de-briefing sessions highlighted the projects importance to how they see their professional roles in society. Above all students cited the need for scientists to build public trust and foster two-way communication with genetic research.*

**Table 5: Engagement as informing**

Worldmaking	“Community engagement (CE) is increasingly promoted for biomedical research conducted in resource poor settings, for both intrinsic reasons (for example to show respect and trustworthiness) and instrumental reasons such as strengthening science through improving acceptability and interest in research, and strengthening ethical practice through improving consent processes” (Angwenyi, et al., 2014, p. 2).
Disrupting	“The actual source of the water, as well as what happens to it once we discard it, was an even more vague matter. One participant simply stated, regarding wastewater, that hopefully it goes to the same place ‘only further down’. This participant was appreciably informed on the subject, knowledge that he acquired out his own curiosity, inspired by his admiration to these feats of technology. Yet generally, knowledge about the water provision was only held by participants who had visited Thames Water sites as part of their studies” (Doron, et al., 2011, p. 556).
Situating	“The last decade has seen a government emphasis on engaging the public in scientific developments, including increasingly issues relating to energy use and supply, chiefly through the provision of information” (Parks & Theobald, 2013, p. 50).
Orienting	“A one-stop-shop format was used in order to minimize the often conflicting nature of information that community members received regarding program benefits from the various administering agencies. This format allows all of the major players to be in one room at the same time to present a balanced view of the issues” (Barnett, et al., 2009, p. 124).
Selfing	“The researchers interacted as coparticipants with the community members and were encouraged to engage in open dialog. At any time, researchers could ask public participants what they thought about any of the cards and vice versa. Total time allotted to the discussion averaged 60–75 minutes. At the end of the discussion time, each group was asked to summarize their table’s discussion to the other tables. All participants received a voucher for free admission to the Museum of Life and Science” (O’Daniel, et al., 2012, p. 245).
Othering	“Users are generally unaware of their own water consumption. Individual perceptions of changes in water behaviour are constrained by habit and lack of knowledge about what changes can be made and how” (Doron, et al., 2011, p. 555).

Positioning	<p>“To maximize participant engagement, the format was purposely designed to be interactive rather than didactic, and the researchers did not lead the discussion but rather were to engage in the activity like a participant who happened to know about genetics/genomics. At the start of the session, all the participants, including the researcher, introduced themselves. The facilitator then guided the participants at the table through several warm-up questions printed on the menu, such as “Does the food you are eating have DNA?” “What is a gene?” and “If you were to draw a genetic scientist, what would they look like?” Public participants were encouraged to ask the researcher clarifying questions if needed and not to rely on them for answers” (O'Daniel, et al., 2012, p. 245).</p>
Perceiving	<p>“An issue recognised and discussed often in public meetings and in homes particularly at the outset of the study, and linked to pre-existing concerns and rumours about KEMRI being ‘devil worshipers’, was some of the local wording in information sheets and consent forms for compensation and randomisation. Particularly problematic was the translation of ‘randomisation’ into ‘pata potea’; (which translates to win or lose) a local dice game, with animals drawn on the dice instead of numbers. Rather than being interpreted as being assigned to the experimental vaccine (win) or control (lose), the explanation was understood to mean the possibility of losing a child. This also fed into perceptions that the experimental vaccine was already known to work. Related to concerns about pata potea, some participants also interpreted compensation for adverse events to imply a high possibility of death” (Angwenyi, et al., 2014, p. 11).</p>
Sequencing	<p>“In addition, a questionnaire was used to record individual attitudes to, and perceptions of, climate change, prior to the focus group activity. The questionnaire followed the variables from the Grunig and Hunt model, and used statements which participants ranked in terms of agreement or disagreement using a five-point Likert scale. Results from the questionnaire were combined with the focus group data to cross-reference the two sets of results” (Featherstone, et al., 2008, p. 219).</p>
Evaluating	<p>“Conference participants were asked to complete a program evaluation questionnaire at the end of the session. Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire revealed that 95 percent of the respondents reported that they learned material that they believed would help them to better serve their clients” (Barnett, et al., 2009, p. 128).</p>
Visioning	<p>“Early and ongoing engagement of communities, and meaningful communication, through extension officers being placed in the communities, appear key to meaningful community engagement in project design and implementation. When effective communication occurs, communities are aware, at every stage, of what is happening and of their role within the project” (Dyer, et al., 2014, p. 142).</p>

Moralizing	<p>“Given the rapid pace of genetic and genomic research and technology development, it is increasingly important for the public to gain an understanding of genetic concepts and associated ethical and policy issues to enable informed deliberation and decision making with respect to participation in genome research studies and use of clinical genome applications. Similarly, it is essential for researchers to be aware of public perceptions and potential concerns about their work because it may promote researcher–participant interactions and development of study-related materials for (prospective) participants” (O’Daniel, et al., 2012, p. 248).</p>
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"If they only understood \_\_\_\_\_ the world would be a better place."

As much as authors may try to avoid it, the story of "engagement as informing" continues to have the above quote at its core. However in the newer sources I've accumulated here we see some welcome departures from old deficiency-centered lenses and homogenous notions of the public.

Before focusing on these two developments I'll just mention that there is plenty to pick on in this story. It's a classic story held in circles ranging from primary education to nano-tech startups. Some roots of the story can be found in the assertion that democracy relies on an informed public. However that assertion rarely delves into how that public arises—a pedagogical question which "informing" often only implies. In popular education circles the "informing" story has been widely critiqued as a type of "banking" education(Freire, 2000/1970). As a result these stories often position others as means to an external end rather than ends in themselves.

While I believe these critiques still stand, current stories of engagement as informing have departed from their more problematic forebears in at least two important respects. The first departure is an attempt to discard, or at least spread out, the deficiency-centered lenses. In older stories we see a positioning of the disrupting ignorance almost solely upon the other, their social conditions, and their often-limited exposure to a given topic or experience. While this basic assertion may stand, currently, authors are also keen to point out how experts/scientists are widely ignorant of publics and in particular they are ignorant of the way publics gain and process information. This more complex dilemma requires engagement in these stories. It's a

process of mutual informing. More precisely it's a project of informing the public on a given topic while equipping experts with the skills and sensibilities to be trusted informers. There is room for a two-way street here ranging from the shallow participation of publics in rhetorical experiments of information delivery, to publics co-developing information sessions, all the way to publics demanding certain topics to be informed upon and how that base information ought to be gathered. In the story above I've remained on the shallower end of this spectrum as have many of the authors cited in the above table.

A second development is the recognition of a heterogeneous public. In my view, the rise of academic specialization, a larger managerial middle class, and the necessity to acknowledge "culture" in most research have all contributed to this admission that publics are no longer undifferentiated masses. In the resources I've gathered for this particular story most articles position the heterogeneous public as presenting a rhetorical challenge to informing others. However it's also possible to position these various publics as living different realities which necessitate different kinds and methods of informing as we see in Palmer-Wackerly, et al (2014). Both of these new developments offer some wiggle room in this old story of engagement as informing. Perhaps we should question if this wiggle room is enough or if the core assertion of this story will continue to plague its track record.

Humorously, I believe Dr. Spock can serve as a useful caricature of the protagonist in these stories. As most all of us know Dr. Spock is a rather smart individual but, from a human perspective, he suffers from a certain psychosis. Citing statistics, probabilities, and logic he tries to inform various humans he sees as acting quite illogically. He does not let his feelings sway his judgments but rather acts on a more pure rationality. Such appeals to "reason" abound from every academic domain, country store, and political party and somehow we continue to be amazed by these alien "others" acting irrationally. A great number of us engage these "others" by *informing* them of the proper data needed to reach a rational, unemotional decision. Yet we rarely try to contemplate what a fully rational person might look like. As a number of psychologist point out there are indeed examples of "some humans who do reason

without emotion. They, and maybe they alone, are not self-righteous, hypocritical, or self-contradictory. They can weigh costs and benefits coolly and objectively in any situation...These individuals are known as psychopaths" (Fink, 2014, p. 25). In difference to psychopaths, not only do "well-rounded" humans base decisions on a number of different rationalities (economic, environmental, political, "spiritual"), they also, in the context of any choice negotiate these various rationalities amid the context-based medium of human relationalities or emotions. Expecting humans to do otherwise would be like requesting that Earth begin looking a whole lot more like Vulcan. Indeed that may be Utopia for some personalities. However if academics consistently believe the story that engagement is about informing—they will consistently and rightly be labeled as pedants, out-of-touch know-it-alls, and consequently, they risk becoming largely irrelevant.

Humor and metaphor aside, I'll point out that many stories of engagement as informing are rooted in "hard " notions of science coming from physics, chemistry, and biology—disciplines often heralded as leading us into the future and assuring survival of the human race (which is rather ironic considering some probable modes of our mutual demise). One question I'm left with, given the highly specialized nature of current science and modes of governing, is engagement beyond informing becoming less and less possible? Is informing becoming the only plausible avenue of engagement in certain areas of progress? Is the expert increasingly called upon to just inform others? In the near and distant future, how many experts might one need in order to live a well-informed life? Of course, there's some talk of "upstream" public engagement in the sciences but as many of the articles cited above point out, often all that travels upstream is public need or public ignorance in need of more though perhaps different expert knowledge.

I'm curious as to how the academic notion of neutrality figures into this story. A number of articles mentioned it here and indeed some project participants cited in these studies have pointed to the role universities have as neutral arbiters. If academics position themselves outside of neutrality would that change the story? Would some doubt as to the pure rationality of research introduce the need for deliberation across perspectives? Academics rarely position



themselves in an ecology of other well-informed informers but that might be a possibility in this story. It may even mark a transition between informing and catalyzing conversation or negotiating knowledges.

Another line of questions, in light of the "Wheel of Empowerment" (see Appendix D) described in Davidson (1998) one thing we may admit is that in a democracy, publics must be provided with information they want or need. I believe, there are ways to think of this puzzle through a lens of access which might raise questions about the Freedom of Information Act or unrestricted access to education, or there are ways to think of this puzzle through expert professionalism. Most of the stories here try to lean on the latter by stating the role of the expert is that of the informer. The result, in my view, is a less agentive role for the public. However I'd welcome a challenge to this. If knowledge is power, perhaps the most efficient means of building it is to have well equipped informers. Perhaps, to ignore our individual strengths and specialties is counter-productive. Perhaps there will always be a role for informing and we'd be better off discussing the limits of such a task alongside its possibilities.

Please comment online as you see fit and I will post my own thoughts as well. Take a break before reading the last story I'll discuss below.

#### *Engagement as coordinating services*

*The Services Advocacy Group at Moreland College has a twenty-year tradition of partnership with local civil service departments and organizations. Over the past 5 years this partnership has been put to the test following a major slowdown in the manufacturing sector within and surrounding Springville. Two plant closures in 2008 heralded a long-lasting slump in manufacturing that left 1200 people unemployed and further complicated the provision of social services within at-risk populations of Springville. Most jobless workers had little post-secondary education--many never graduated high school. They had little savings or means of retraining themselves. To complicate matters more, there was no foreseeable industry that might move in to reclaim*

*the many jobs lost. These conditions coupled with reduced government appropriations for social services resulted in a multifaceted, multidisciplinary problem that required a network of actors to solve.*

*The Services Advocacy Group (SAG), a multi-sector group of social work professors and graduate students, entered this arena as both a convener of, and consultant to, the various social services departments providing short- to long-term relief for laid off plant workers. Putting the interdisciplinary intellectual capital of Moreland College to work on this multifaceted issue required that SAG nurture a sense of trust and accountability with multiple individuals and organizations throughout Springville. The group resisted the academic/governmental tendency to address problems in disciplinary/departmental silos and began the initiative by surveying the various needs of the workers and how those might guide the priorities of the partnership.*

*From these initial needs assessments SAG formed 4 working groups, each facilitated by a professors and graduate student. The working groups focused on the areas of worker training, health and human services, home economics, and government/commerce relations—bringing the latest knowledge to bear on each of these issues. Convening each of these separate working groups in quarterly strategy and information sessions helped ensure the cross-cutting intentions and impact of interventions. Yearly external and internal evaluations tracked indicators of success in these areas.*

*In the past two years, given the resurgent economy in Springville, SAG has remodeled many of their services. Adapting from a crisis response group, to a sustained planning and evaluation group, to now—a public clearinghouse where local service organizations and recipients can go for guidance. This help-desk function along with regular long-term arrangements with civil service departments in Springville ensure that SAG remains responsive to local problems and client needs. Placing Moreland College, and the SAG in*

*particular, as a hub for program innovation and success has empowered the network of problem solvers that serve Springville and the surrounding area. Cooperative funding structures, including fee-for-service opportunities has secured ample and somewhat independent funding streams for the SAG and local partners.*

**Table 6: Engagement as coordinating services**

Worldmaking	“All communities have need for discipline-specific expertise. Local governments, nonprofit groups, and community service organizations must assess their performance, identify priorities, and decide where to spend limited resources. However, these institutions may not have the necessary skills to use information effectively in decision making and may lack the resources to obtain professional assistance in doing so” (Gunaratna, et al., 2006, p. 99).
Disrupting	“Social exclusion occurs when individuals, families and neighbourhoods: experience low incomes relative to community norms and needs; do not have secure and safe shelter; experience unemployment; live in fear in their environment; cannot access the health, child care and social services they need; do not receive adequate schooling; are not connected with friends, families and their neighbourhood; and experience self-esteem and quality of life outcomes well below those of the general Australian community. Such exclusion impacts on individuals, families and communities, leading to involvement in criminal activity and contributes to increased levels of public spending on welfare and related public services. The social and economic costs of social exclusion are associated with a decline in social cohesion and an inability to harness society’s human capital resources” (Howard, et al., 2010, p. 50).
Situating	“The technique of modifying human behaviour simultaneously from the top down and the bottom up has developed out of a field-level understanding that sustainable benefits can be achieved only by forging active and participatory cooperation among individuals, communities, and the public and private sectors” (Yacoob, et al., 2004, p. 134).
Orienting	“American university presidents are embracing the idea that their universities ‘should be engaged in problem solving for the broader society and the state and local community’ (Myers & Banerjee, 2005, p. 126), with an understanding that the partnership should be mutually beneficial. Outreach and engagement are integral to the mission of land-grant universities, which were created to ‘provide equal access to education and service to communities’ (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 1). U of I’s mission explicitly states the institution’s role as ‘a land-grant institution committed to undergraduate and graduate-research education with Extension services responsive to Idaho and the region’s business and community needs’ (Lanning, et al., 2011, p. 6).

Selfing	<p>“TAP also draws on its knowledge of the latest research and best practice technologies and methodologies and offers potential partners many levels of engagement, from incremental improvements to transformational change and technology adoption. This knowledge of “what can be” is derived from the research developments of the faculty at Purdue and elsewhere, the literature, conferences, and other sources” (McKinnis, et al., 2014, p. 194).</p>
Othering	<p>“The first step to empowering communities and giving them a voice is listening to what they have to say. About 60,000 people in 60 countries were asked what would make the greatest difference in their lives and they responded that they needed...”(Yacoob, et al., 2004, p. 136).</p>
Positioning	<p>"Community-university partnerships are initiated in different ways. Ideas may come through Extension faculty who bring community needs to the landscape architecture Extension specialist, who then relays them to the on-campus faculty through the BSCI's executive committee. If community needs align with the initiative's goals, faculty expertise, and academic objectives, staff from the university visit the community, meet with local leaders, and form a partnership based on a set of criteria tightly linked to the university's strategic plan. Alternatively, long-term partnerships may also grow out of short-term, faculty-initiated projects in which the community has other needs that may engage different academic departments" (Laniga, et al., 2011, p. 10).</p>
Perceiving	<p>“Successfully navigating these relationships can be an arduous task, with each party having to confront and challenge existing notions about their partners. Faculty and staff members can no longer consider the community to be just a site for data collection, and leaders in the community should be encouraged to welcome the advice of the university, to see it as a resource that can positively affect economic and community development” (Garber, et al. 2010, p. 70).</p>
Sequencing	<p>“The process begins with a community-wide listening session, where UGA faculty members facilitate small-group discussions with community members. They ask questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the community as well as gather feedback about what the community members determine to be the most pressing issues in their community. They also identify the community's assets that can be applied to these issues. The Archway Partnership team members collect and synthesize the information gathered in these small-group discussions. The results are summarized in a report, which provides the foundation for the engagement between the community and the university” (Garber, et al. 2010, p. 73).</p>

Evaluating	"The benefits to community partners were the most apparent. The Sagamore Parkway Task Force and city of West Lafayette received free consulting services while using appropriate methods to gather information. All interviewed community partners mentioned that by acting as a neutral third party, the STATCOM students provided statistical expertise that validated the results of the surveys as well as the recommendations and actions that followed from those results. The students' role increased residents' and business owners' confidence that decisions were made based on impartial information that accurately reflected their views. In turn, residents' and business owners' opinions were considered in decision making, and improvements to the community were made based on their input" (Gunaratna, et al., 2006, p. 102-103).
Visioning	"Not only can linking State with community institutions allow for more sustainable interventions by donors building local capacity, but this linkage can eventually render these interventions unnecessary by increasing the capacity of the State and civil society to work together so that they can address these issues on their own"(Yacoob, et al., 2004, p. 138).
Moralizing	"This report stated that among the most important factors needed for university extension to remain viable into the future were a focus on current societal issues, some flexibility in programming, and planning that includes a component of future visioning. Responsiveness to local needs has long been the hallmark of extension programming, so responding to the war as a partner to support children and families is just another programming component for citizens in need" (Edwards, 2009, p. 86).

"Engagement as coordinating services" is at once a very classic story with a very smart edge. It's classic since it largely supports the iconic division between problem havers and problem solvers--a division central to service-oriented welfare and development structures. The smart edge comes from the embrace of systems thinking that widens the cadre of expert actors to include in problem-solving ventures. The essence of this story is largely held in the positioning of these actors. The "other" plays a very distinct role, the protagonist self is identified as a type of networked, multidisciplinary consultant. The focus on client satisfaction is undeniable and powerful.

The role of the other can be largely summarized in a quote included in the table above: "The first step to empowering communities and giving them a voice is listening to what they have to say. About 60,000 people in 60 countries were asked what would make the greatest difference in their lives and they responded that they needed..."(Yacoob, et al., 2004, p. 136). The

scale of that particular story is enormous, but without fail in these stories the primary role that the other has is speaking his or her needs. This particular kind of "voice" is described as a more active role for citizens to play. However, it produces a role for the other as a need haver and a role for the self as a needs assessor and trusted listener.

In the sequencing language of this story, the self as needs assessor quickly turns to the role of a networked consultant. As highlighted in the story above, this systems thinking approach eschews the tradition of approaching needs in silos and subsequently offers a more networked approach to problem solving that may involve various working groups or cross-disciplinary steering committees. This network of experts can bring the most current knowledge to bear on these wicked problems facing communities. As one example quote from the table above lays out, such a consulting group "draws on its knowledge of the latest research and best practice technologies and methodologies and offers potential partners many levels of engagement, from incremental improvements to transformational change and technology adoption. This knowledge of 'what can be' is derived from the research developments of the faculty at [the university] and elsewhere, the literature, conferences, and other sources" (McKinnis, et al., 2014, p. 194). Here we see the role of the self as a well-informed and efficient problem solver.

A third characteristic of this story is a focus on the importance of assessment--particularly a type of assessment that bears a resemblance to client satisfaction. Clients have a need and a good assessment within this story calculates the fulfillment of that need and formatively cites insights into improving the system. Given the current trend across education and policy that encourages assessment- and data-driven work, this story's particular attention to evaluation bolsters its popularity. Not only does the convening nature of this story necessitate a well established institution, the particular brand of continual assessment, data collection, and project (re)implementation does as well. Unsurprisingly, we see highly resourced groups as the protagonists of these stories. As one quote detailing the Georgia-based Archway Partnership explains,

*"by maintaining a close relationship with community members throughout the process, Archway professionals and administrative staff receive direct feedback from county commissioners, city managers, school superintendents, and other business and community leaders on the impact of Archway-facilitated projects. Archway staff collect tangible final products, portfolios, reports, and other project data. This information is compiled in a central database, which is used for determining common community needs, utilization of specific higher education resources, and cost savings or value" (Garber, et al. 2010, p. 79).*

As you can see, there's an element of scale that enters into the support structure for this story. It's difficult to be such a convener and coordinator of services as an individual or smaller institution.

A comical allegory of this story goes along the lines of those many comic books and TV shows where a group of individuals, when brought together, possess the power to meet any dilemma. The Avengers, Voltron, The Justice League, the Power Rangers, the X-Men, The Fantastic Four, and the A-Team are a few such examples of groups you might phone up when crisis strikes. The members compliment and clash with one another's extra-human talents creating a quite human drama around the truism that we are better together. These stories, both those in comic books and peer-reviewed literature speak of pooling resources, complimenting talents, and investment in group infrastructure. These stories while they may be comforting within institutional walls might not be very nourishing within society at large. The protagonists of these stories can paint the rest of the world as the either a villain or a damsel. In conjuring a networked hero or band of consultants to save the world these stories might be nothing more than institutional junk food, especially if these stories work to further solidify some supremacist notion of institutional power.

Let's come back to reality a bit by posing some questions. I'll start with the notion of scale in these networked efforts to coordinate services. How might the large-scale nature of

these coordinated projects impact their value for better and for worse? We hear about the sum of these projects being greater than their parts—but we also hear of endless meetings and staff positions geared toward mid-level coordination. Is this "overhead" at the expense of community change or is investment in the networked approach really beneficial? For whom?

The identification of selves and others as problem solvers and problem havers, or need providers and need havers respectively, is ethically flawed in my view and raises a central question for this "engagement" moment. Should we even call stories "engagement" when the only thing allowed to travel "upstream" are needs and wants? Can we get beyond this notion of others (and selves for that matter) as only providing this or that to the situation?

Lastly, how does this particular story relate to the current aspirations of large institutions? The hub of coordination and information flow is a powerful responsibility that brings in quite a bit of money but it also invites more external control from other private and public power players. What's your experience of this story in institutional contexts?

I appreciate your comments and any ideas you have to further the discussion online.

#### *Engagement as...*

Of course, the list of engagement stories goes on and on from here. I've only highlighted six in depth for this paper. The six covered in depth are important as they appear rather often in the archive of peer-reviewed texts—and they represent a good spread of difference between stories. Yet, there are more and more stories everyday that merit further exploration. I've included three such stories in the online version of this text that I'll be adding to throughout the coming years. These stories are somewhat emergent. These narratives (working titles in *italics*) 1) detail the rise of engagement discourse in new fields that are *pursuing potential* for collaboration, 2) describe the interesting conflation of engagement practices with *assessing future* public opinions around, and often acceptance of, new technology, and 3) highlight the confluence of engagement discourse and *community organizing*. But the point is that new stories



keep cropping up. They're different stories to some degree and once again these differences matter.

As these "new" stories, these different stories, arise in the terrain of engagement we should approach them with a critical curiosity that asks, "How is this story being told? Further still we can propose a response to the question, "Why is this story being told in this way?" Such a critical response to engagement stories is necessary if we want to keep one another and ourselves accountable to the language games we're playing. We can't get outside of these games but we can approach them with a certain refreshing seriousness that I've attempted to offer in this chapter. By way of concluding this piece, I want to frame a general proposal for what I've found across these narratives as well as some guidelines for the pursuit of rhetorical interpretation and critical praxis within the terrain of engagement stories. Ideally this (post)structural project, and your participation in it, can expand the possibilities of what engagement might come to be and mean in the future. Practically, this involves offering some sense of where we are now and subsequently some lessons about how we might push beyond the unnecessary limits of our public work.

### **Reawakening the narrative sense**

When I began this project, I'm sure some part of me wished that these stories of engagement would fall along a tidy continuum. That hasn't happened—and I won't attempt to shoehorn this interpretation into such an ill-fitting package. Rather, I'd first like to place my broad findings under the scope of a general obligation. It is this: I firmly believe that our success, particularly our success in building better relationships across our many differences, will depend greatly upon the reawakening of our narrative sensibility.

I say this for three reasons. First, our narrative senses can lend us an impression of *where we are* in a given moment. Second, by referencing our past and trying to prefigure our future, stories can help us answer the question of *where* and *how we ought to be going*. And lastly, a narrative can help us (re)negotiate *who we are* in both the individual and collective sense. I'll

briefly cover these three points in the final sections of this paper. From this point on I'll discuss my findings through the metaphors and allegories of terrain, ecology, and journeys of engagement.

For now I'll try to describe where we are in terms of the storied terrain of engagement. As in orienteering where we might find our position through triangulation, or concepts of latitude, longitude, elevation, etc., we might think of a narrative cartography using a number of similar ideas as I have throughout the past interpretations. I've focused on twelve narrative facets or moves (in bold) that work to locate a story and thereby particular people in the terrain of engagement. I'll move through each of these rather quickly here and describe some of my general interpretations of where various people might find themselves. In laying these out I hope to heighten our innate capacity for the narrative sense making I'm advocating for. I hope none of you will read a story of engagement in quite the same way.

I'll begin with one of the most elemental pieces of story craft—**worldmaking**. Reading any good novel brings you viscerally into a storyworld of the author's making and engagement stories should be considered no different. What's telling in engagement stories is how tightly bound world-making is with the **disrupting** element in the story. In peer-reviewed engagement stories *the problems of the world seem to be all that constitute the world*. I believe there's a reason for this conflation in peer-reviewed circles and it lies in a certain idea of improvement or progress assumed within academic/professional identity. E. B. White's famous quote describes the human situation well, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve (or save) the world and a desire to enjoy (or savor) the world, this makes it hard to plan the day" (quoted in Shenker, 1969). Engagement stories largely ignore this human dilemma since at the core of engagement stories writ-large is a desire to improve the world, rather than "merely" enjoy it. This requires, in an author's mind, the making of a problem-filled world that their story seeks to confront. Indeed such a story is structured into the traditional idea of research or funding as they are almost solely based on "problem statements" a particular action is intended to address. I'll write about this curiosity at great length in the last chapter of the dissertation but I'll go

ahead and say that there may be a place for engagement stories that do world-making separate from the disrupting elements—but that would require something professionals rarely express in the introduction to a journal article—faith in others. Without this faith, the peer-reviewed archive of engagement seems to have a certain hero bias that I'll discuss in depth through Chapter Six.

This digression aside, **disrupting** can take many forms throughout engagement stories. The difference lies in both where or in whom lies a particular problem and how we might approach that problem—an **orienting** question. In engagement stories we see the classic positioning of others possessing problems (such as in evidence-based intervention, and coordinating services). However we also see a notion that selves may in fact be the problem (as in data gathering). Different still we can place a disrupting force shared amid a network of actors (as in informing, catalyzing conversation, and negotiating knowledges). These aren't stiff boundaries. Yet, who has a problem doesn't dictate how we might go about approaching it—**orienting** language can advocate for everything from conversation, to better data, to envisioning new roles, to iconoclasm. Take notice that this orienting language has a great influence on a story's **sequencing** language—literally what the characters in the stories do—which I'll cover a bit later.

I'll admit that a story's worldmaking, disrupting, and orienting moves (indeed all the storytelling facets covered here) have a great deal to do with how these stories are situated—their particular occasion for telling. All of these stories covered in this chapter come from peer-reviewed literature, which in traditional circles means that these stories are meant to be told by academics or professionals to other academics or professionals. **Situating** language is not always made apparent. While authors may pick a certain journal because of its audience they often don't expound their reasoning behind why in the article itself. I realize that in different situations—in front of study participants or the general public—these authors may have told different stories. This is not the same thing as code-switching or speaking in registers—this is literally telling different stories which isn't necessarily justifiable. The telling of different stories

to different groups could be political spin—giving the major benefit to the spinners themselves. In my opinion, until engagement practitioners begin to reevaluate the meaning of peer in peer-reviewed—how and for whom these stories are situated, and why, will not be adequately explorable. To make the only inferable more explicit "Who are *we*?" is a good question to bring forward throughout these conversations. I delve into this question alongside a number of others in Chapter Four

While largely lacking a broad "we" narrative—engagement stories are full of **selfing** and **othering** language. I've already spoken briefly about the orientation of the disrupting situation as characterizing various selves and others in these stories. Beyond this, selves and others are endowed with certain capacities and powers. Some authors of engagement typologies have referred to these as types of capital which certain characters bring to the situation (Barker, 2006; Marks 2008, 2013). For instance, Marks (2008, 2013) further divides these types of capital into technical capital, including various scientific methods; and/or political capital, in terms of relationships to government, funders, or communities. As I've already hinted throughout the discussions of individual stories, who is positioned as having X, needing Y, or experiencing problem Z is profoundly important character development language in engagement stories.

While various deficiencies and capacities may go a long way to develop characters in these engagement stories I was also struck in this study by the temporal quality of how a character was narrated. For instance, in engagement as gathering data we have a small focus on the self as implicated in the historical problem, yet we see a future-oriented narration of the self throughout the majority of the text--it's a self newly-empowered by better data gathering. This visionary reading of a character in the story can also impact others. In engagement as negotiating knowledges, others are often given new roles as co-researchers through which authors story change. Conversely, we see some stories that focus on historic reflections of the characters. In engagement as evidence-based intervention, we see a historic reflections largely focused on the conditions of the other. Still further we see a focus on narrating the present moment where history and vision may both be present. We see this particularly in the reflexive

narration of the self in engagement as catalyzing conversation and engagement as negotiating knowledges. I've referred to this narrative positioning as selves-in-development. I'm still curious about the temporal nature of these narrations. I suspect the temporal nature of selfing and othering language informs further **positioning** moves that round out much of the character development in each engagement narrative. The story changes quite a lot if we focus on the self/other that was, that is, or that could be.

**Sequencing** language can give us some indication of the actions these characters take with, for, or on, one another. In a number of stories this sequence seems to follow a well-trod research timeline—problem selection, question formulation, data gathering, interpretation, and evaluation. Other stories present a sequence that avoids this classic storyline. Stories represented in engagement as catalyzing conversation or negotiating knowledges often spend a good deal of time focusing on actions that precede the well-trod research sequence. They focus a great deal of effort on how selves navigate through and into communities which mirrors the self-reflexive narration of these stories. Though, most stories do eventually point to a traditional sequence of the research process. Here we can discern who is involved in these various stages of research, and in what capacity. Thus, power becomes quite evident in sequencing language. While most engagement stories are bookended by the gospel of democratic participation, many neglect to deliberate on what that means throughout the narrative sequence. For engagement stories, sequencing language is where rhetoric meets reality.

Having a penchant for storytelling, I'm quite keen to notice whether or not a particular case study of engagement includes what narratologists call **perceiving** language. If an author can convey what it is like to be in a certain situation, then in a most elementary sense they've succeeded as a storyteller. For me, the emotional tenor of a story that we soak up through this perceiving language is what makes the story both believable and relatable. Sadly in my opinion, some engagement stories largely leave out this perceptive voice--rather sticking to description alone. When stories do include a large degree of perceiving language they focus on such

feelings as discomfort, frustration, disorientation, anger, and shame—though these aren't necessarily "bad."

Moving on to **evaluating**, which I define away from its traditional use in narratology, we see a glimpse of how engagement stories qualify their narrative journey as successful or not. Most stories stay true-to-form here. Their orientation to the problem often dictates their evaluative tone. If oriented to the problem through numbers, an author often takes a numerical approach to evaluation. Likewise if oriented through self-reflexivity, authors often use the perceiving voice as an evaluative tool. Through evaluating language we notice that these stories fall quite differently on quite different ears—a clue to a narrative's situated-ness. Here, funders, government agencies, the general public, publics-in-particular, or the authors themselves may take center seat in the audience. Those differences in audience matter a great deal as it refers to an author's theory of changing the world.

Lastly we come upon the acts of **visioning** and **moralizing**. There is not much to say here. Either through the tradition of academic neutrality or the assumed platitudes of progress, many authors fail to explicitly narrate what the world ought to be like and why. If I were to narrate the most generalized of engagement stories through only an intro and an outro it would resemble the following:

*The world is full of problems--we can see that. We should change the world so that there aren't problems, because wouldn't that be nice.*

Such a common backbone belies the divisions between stories. Only in iconoclastic moments of some narratives do we get glimmers of different shorelines. In my mind the most powerful of these iconoclastic moments in current literature, and it strikes a kind of limit, is a revived sense of sovereignty being brought into engagement. This moment attempts to dissolve the division between selves and others to bring people rather than problems to the center of the narrative journey. And these are not crowds or masses of people, but heterogeneous, and perhaps small,

groups. However as regards most current stories if you ask, "So, what's the moral of the story?" you would often be met with silence or something vaguely boring. This is a shame in my view.

These general findings attempt to lay out a rather large research agenda. The rest of this dissertation will only lightly scratch the surface of some big questions that our engagement stories are raising. At the very least I hope that the next time you read a journal article on engagement you keep an eye toward the narrative structure it's playing with. At best, I would love your help in further pursuing this research on the narrative structure of engagement. As one transmissible gift, below I've listed some particular questions one can ask of themselves or others in trying to encircle an individual story of engagement.

- Is there any description of the world separate from the disrupting element? If yes, how do authors characterize the world--what is it full of?
- How is the disrupting element of the story placed among the actors/institutions? Who personifies this disrupting force?
- What kind of approach is deemed necessary to understand or solve a given problem? How does that orient certain characters in relation to one another?
- How broad of an audience is this story intended to be told to? Who are they? If this story may need to be told differently to different audiences, why is that?
- What are the various deficiencies and capacities that characters in the story possess? How are these characters narrated in relation to time--are we focused on their past, present, or future? What about these characters are we leaving out?
- When does a story start? Throughout the sequencing language, who is included in each phase, and in what capacity?
- Do the authors adequately convey what it is like to be in a certain situation? What are some of the feelings an author is trying to illuminate?
- How does an author narrate success and failure? Is it through numbers or first-person voice? Who is this evaluation supposed to convince?

- What is an author's sense of the way the world should be, and what is her or his defense as to why? If these are only implicit, would anyone disagree with that vision/moral?
- Why is this story being told this particular way rather than another way? In asking this question of your own story—you may uncover the presence or absence of a certain moral.

I'd encourage you to critique these questions and pose others I haven't thought of in the comments online. Perhaps one of these questions can spark (y)our critical curiosity at this important moment where "engagement" as a discourse might be reaching for some sort of zenith.

### **Engaging beyond the well-rehearsed story**

From these questions and curiosities I offer no prescriptive solution—I'm not offering the answer. You should be wary of anyone that tries. Rather, I hope this exercise has raised your curiosity around a very important "prior question" we must have at the heart of our engagements. Alisdair MacIntyre (1984) said "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'" (p. 216).

This chapter has placed a great deal of emphasis on responding to that "prior question." You'll recall I began this chapter speaking about Mary Parker Follett. After reading more of her work, especially a book called *The New State*, I came to revisit something I've heard time and again about engagement work. This work is about relationships. But that maxim in and of itself is not enough—we must acknowledge all the different identities at play in these relationships. Indeed as you can see in the individual stories above, each story represents a certain kind of relationship that people find themselves a part of. I've tried to characterize, often satirize, these relationships by talking very briefly about the identity of the protagonist in each story. We can see the jean-clad scientist of *evidence-based intervention*, the camp counselor of *catalyzing conversations*, and the programmer of *data gathering*. We can notice the modern day disciple



spreading the good news of *negotiating knowledges* through our research. We can notice our internal Dr. Spocks *informing* certain illogical others, while still elsewhere teams of superheroes are *coordinating services* for damsels, or against common enemies. In earlier versions of this manuscript I didn't include these somewhat slighting characters. I didn't and still don't want to dismiss these stories above as bad stories. But in including these identities now, I *do* want to propose that moving beyond these well-rehearsed characters and these well-rehearsed stories ought to be a central thread within the scholarship of engagement. In the previous section I've detailed a number of questions we can take forward into our daily work. Now, understanding something more of where we are—of what story or stories we find ourselves a part—I'll shift slightly to further questions of where and how we might ought to be going.

Knowing the limits of our particular stories we must never lose the ability to question them as I have above. Yet we must also exercise the muscles necessary to tell, and also hear new stories. In such a way, seeing the past in clearer but never complete view we can learn to create and live stories we've never heard before. We can realize new characters, new worlds, and new perceptive senses. We can find new lessons and new occasions to tell our stories.

For the rest of this dissertation I'm going to upset some central dynamics that run through many of the narratives above. I'll also be encouraging you, in your own practice, to disrupt these rather flat stories in your own way. I'll shift my focus from the stories authors often share to the abundance of different stories a larger We could be, should be, and in some spaces are, sharing. Through all of this I'm intent to question the limits of the stories that institutions and broader publics can speak and hear about this engagement they seek. In Chapters Three, Four, and Five I discuss some practice stories of my own, and those I've shared with others. These stories disrupt some commonly shared assumptions and identities in this work of engagement. Chapters Three and Four in particular question the sharp delineation of characters these stories often portray and reinforce. These chapters give me an abiding sense that engagement involves a certain journey of walking together, and becoming known to one another, rather than attempting to heroically intervene in one another's lives. In Chapter Five I

hint at a different sense of academic practice, particularly academic writing that might be necessary to set out on such adventure. In Chapter Six I'll try to dig as deep as I can to help us understand some very different choices we have in this engagement moment.

The stories I'll share hope to disrupt the *transactional* relationships prevalent in engagement where we exchange our various types of capital and impose a sharp division of labor in our partnerships with one another. It's my hope and my truth that this work is about *transformational* relationships where we ourselves change in the process. I'm a firm believer that "if this work doesn't change you as a person, then you're not doing it right" (S. Wilson, 2004, p. 160). The scholarship of engagement ought to focus on that dynamic change that can occur in our lives, and has occurred in my life over past years. It's my opinion and my experience that we'll come to understand our selves, our meanings, and our goodness by walking together, slowly—uninterested in shortcuts while sauntering a new road in good company. It's from those spaces and along those roads that we will each come to see what little we understand, to welcome stories we've never heard before, and to speak stories we've yet to tell.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MOVING TOWARD DIGNITY

*Some stories happen in an instant.*

*Four years ago I became involved with a grant called Food Dignity that seemed to have a similar idea about relational work as I did. But I'd never been in a research project before—I'd never been a research student. I didn't know what I was doing. And that became clear during my first day on the job.*

*That day I had walked down the hill from Cornell and crossed the bridge that separated my white middle-class neighborhood of Fall Creek from the community of North Side. I was going to meet the local community organizer with Food Dignity. I found her house and there I sat, a southern white male graduate student in the managed home of a woman I didn't know. Her name is Jemila Sequeira. She asked me what I do.*

*I said, "Well, I collect stories of folks that are working to organize their communities around issues of social justice."*

In the preceding parallel text of Chapter One I spoke of learning, in the Frierian sense, the art of reading the world. Though I couldn't yet, as it turns out, read myself. I position a *kairotic* moment, or a moment outside of chronological time, occurring when I first met Jemila Sequeira. In some ways it was there that I also met myself.

Here I noticed most palpably wearing my whiteness and academic-ness.

I've come to view this character I was playing, which is part and parcel of many university-based endeavors as a kind of benevolent problem solver. If you look to the dialog at the left you see Jemila asking me a question and I continue to offer a solution to a problem I assume for her or in her. I take it for granted that solving other people's problems is my role in academia. This role has much to do with providing technical, rational solutions

*Without skipping a beat Jemila asked, "Why would someone in my position ever tell someone like you how I organize communities of color?"*

*I was, needless to say, set back on my heels just a bit.*

*I parried, "Well there are all sorts of folks that are dealing with similar issues across the US and your story can be of real value to them."*

*Leaning a little bit closer, she said, "I know my stories are valuable. And you don't think I share them?" She added, "I share them with folks who need to know."*

*Needless to say I was set back on my heels again.*

*Here I was meeting Jemila for the first time and assuming I could in some way solve a problem I presumed for her. Our meeting went on for another two hours or so but I don't really remember the rest of it. I wandered back to my house with this icky feeling—a mixture of shame and disorientation.*

*I spent the next few months reading incessantly about whiteness and privilege—an academic's remedy for racism. I beefed up on the rhetoric of liberatory praxis. I stayed indoors.*

to global problems, in general I will claim that it has much to do with the underlying structure and function of academic institutions which have been called messianic (Bowers, 1967) and pastoral (Gabbard, 1993).

I'm jumping ahead of myself though. At the time I couldn't name what I was doing or what I was that made me uncomfortable. I just knew that I was uncomfortable and had to stop. As David Appelbaum (1995) says, "the blind move by means of the stop. The exigence of their situation returns the attention to its bodily habitat, thereby activating a forgotten organ of perception" (p. 107). Accordingly, it is through such blindness and discomfort that we learn reflexively about our identity (Boler & Zembylas, 2003).

As I have experienced in particular through this story to the left, shame is profoundly salient emotion in this discomfort. Indeed shame as an emotional pedagogy has been widely recognized in the work of cross-cultural learning (Werry & O'Gorman, 2007; Zembylas, 2008) and reconciliation (Mazzei, 2011) both of which figure prominently in this work of engagement. It's also central in the

*Emerging from my house some months later I seemed to have been through some kind of failed metamorphosis. I “knew” more about myself but the “now what”—my own embodiment of something new—just wasn’t there. I still didn’t feel comfortable acting in “new” skin. Like a grasshopper after a molt I felt a fuller sense of myself yet one that left me weak and vulnerable—fragile.*

*Over the past four years working with Food Dignity throughout similar discomfort of identity and difference I’ve come to learn a great deal about who I am, and at least for me and a few others, what this work of engaging one another is all about. I’ve come to view my role in this work as a friend. Not the kind of friend you just hang out with, or one that doesn’t get on your nerves, but rather a friend that seeks to be understanding and committed. I began to seek a more faith-full and consummate kind of friendship.*

religious, healing practice of contrition. I find in my story that it’s through such processes of discomfort where we find things we’re less comfortable being and doing. We seek out other options for working that fit better with our self-concept and contextual, opaque realities(Shotter, 2009, p. 22).

I position myself having learned that I’m less and less comfortable with a service approach to academic practice and I reposition myself in the role of being a friend—though I qualify to an extent what I mean by that “more consummate friendship.” Ivan Illich, who I came to understand more thoroughly through this time was “certain that the quest for truth cannot thrive outside the nourishment of mutual trust flowering into a commitment to friendship”(Illich, 2002, p. 235). In many ways my journey into that relationship began in June 2011.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TO SUSTAIN STORIES OF US

*Inspired by Jemila Sequeira and Scott Peters*

So far in this dissertation I've been speaking of general engagement stories that often follow a rather basic storyline. Engagement is a story of selves and others who interact in certain ways to make the world as it is, the way it should be. Chapter Two attempted to show the variation within this narrative terrain by interpreting various "moves" made by authors in storying their engagements with others. However these language games or stories of engagement, structured in Chapter Two also reproduce certain limits within the idea of engagement. These stories often follow rather comfortable, simple, even cartoonish, dichotomies. For instance, engagement narratives can juxtapose selves and others in rather flat ways—reproducing identities of haves and have-nots, roles of problem havers, and problem solvers. Narrators also tend to highlight their particular interventions as the ultimate source of moving the world from Point A to Point B—a rather simple, linear, and modern way to think about causation. These flattened stories in my view need some shaking up in order to take this messy work of engagement more seriously. Much like Jemila has unsettled my own stories, for the rest of this dissertation I'll be unsettling the structural interpretation of the simple stories I shared in Chapter Two. It's my hope that this unsettling can push us beyond the structured limits of engagement in particular and our public work in general.

To begin this unsettling of common engagement stories, in this chapter I've synthesized a long discussion I've been having with individuals in Tompkins County, New York. This discussion really focuses on a productive tension regarding "Us" in the title above. After many

hours of conversation I've come to embrace "Us" as a concept that exists between any story of two people, including the engaged self and other. However as the stories in this chapter will show, we can speak of "Us" in at least two different ways. For one, psychologists often point out that we humans are quite drawn to identify ourselves through an ego/id-driven lens. In Freud's terms this is *das Ich* and *das Es*—literally "the I" and "the It" respectively. It's a model in which "I" is defined in opposition to, or in difference to, "It"—the other which is not me. This Freudian lens underpins much of Western philosophy and in turn informs many classic engagement stories. The self and the other are narrated as quite different characters on the plain of engagement. This is of course "true" in some ways. I am quite different from many people I work with. We have different skin colors, genders, sexualities, and incomes. But the opposite is also "true." I can be, and even become, in many ways similar to people I engage with. We can live in similar spaces, we can share similar feelings, we can experience similar situations, in similar ways. In this way, contrary to a Freudian I-It model, there is a different lens through which to view ourselves—the *Ich-Du* or, in English, I-Thou or I-You. In this relationship "I" is not defined in difference to, or in separateness from "Thou" but rather the two are mutually constitutive. This second model or lens was made somewhat popular by Martin Buber, but has many antecedents throughout philosophical thought, and religious texts. This lens describes I and Thou in a dialogic space where we can both be and become ourselves.

These two distinctions, the I-It and I-Thou are unavoidable in everyday life and hold a central element of human free will and choice. We are constantly deciding, consciously or unconsciously, whether to approach something outside of ourselves presupposing either an I-It or I-Thou relationship. This either/or/both/and choice frames a certain productive struggle we can have regarding how we come to define a word like "Us." Through the It lens, "Us" is defined in opposition to "Them." Through the Thou lens, "Us" is defined in dialogue with a Thou who is somehow both outside and inside ourselves. Through the first lens the difference between one and the other is made more real—becoming an identifying barrier. This trend holds true in scientifically objective intervention as well as strict manifestations of identity

politics. Through the second lens of I-Thou, the relationship between one and another is somewhat immanent and opaque becoming a milieu of meeting or crossing. In this arena, who I am and who you are not givens. We, Us, You, and I are mutable and can't be distilled to some sort of pure essence. We are messier than that. Consequently it's decidedly easier to use the I-It lens than it is the I-Thou. The first affirms a power and reality of objectivity which superficial observation confirms. The second questions the reality of my particularity and makes my relationship to what can be known, or done, much more complicated. Descartes' *cogito* "I think therefore, I am" is brought into question through the Thou lens. My identity and my role in society is no longer a given but necessitates a certain deliberation among many voices. Regardless of any proclivity, I hope it's apparent that the choice of which lens to use, the I-It or I-Thou is of profound consequence. We make this choice at every moment. With this chapter I share a particular story that foregrounds the space where this choice is made—it's a certain third space where we decide how to approach what we don't yet know. It's my first attempt in this dissertation to radically unsettle the simple and flat stories that are told about what engagement is and should be.

### **The third space of engagement...**

Engagement is a "third space" where selves and others meet, and there, some notion of Us begins making choices about what to do. In using this language of the "third space" I'm cognizant that a great many scholars have qualified this space already. In particular individuals contributing to the scholarship of third world feminism inform much of how I think about third spaces in general and the third space of engagement in particular. Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, AnaLouise Keating, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith all provide scholarship to take this discussion conceptually further than I will in this chapter (see G. Anzaldúa, 1996; Keating, 2002, 2006; Martinot, 2006; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Sandoval, 2002; Smith, 1999). These individuals discuss ideas of bridges, along with whose backs they're built on. They speak of borderlands and the consciousness needed to traverse them and transgress them. Some of this third space or



borderland scholarship has already impacted the discussion around engagement in public institutions(see Taylor, 2002 for an early review). However, rather than rehash those conversations, I'd like to share the most recent result of a broadening conversation I've been having with Jemila Sequeira over the past four years. I credit this conversation, and the "Us" it has made possible, as having changed my life for the better. That conversation began as I described it in Chapter Three.

As much as it pains me to say this, if you read that parallel text you can see that I approached Jemila presupposing an I-It relationship. I assumed I knew her, as object, as I knew myself in different, though benevolently intentioned, contrast to her. In spite of my ignorance, over the past four years I've been the recipient of her hospitality. I've learned, in small ways, how to show and know gratuity, as I've learned to also value contrition when I fall short of being a committed friend. Neither of us is perfect, but we've come to see ourselves in one another to some extent. I feel our relationship has become both good and beautiful, if fragile.

Jemila will tell you that she personifies the third space in many ways. From her childhood home to her role as the director of the Whole Community Project, Jemila has occupied the space between worlds both actual and possible. In December of 2014, after building a relationship with Jemila for over three years, she and I began the research project this paper tries to convey. The research took shape amid the confluence of conversations I'd been having with Jemila about the troubles and possibilities of collaborative work, along with my nascent research into the engagement archive. That conversation eventually led us to this concept of the third space in which engagement stories play out. That metaphor had traction and intrigue for us both. In regards the peer-reviewed conversation, I conveyed my suspicion that a great many stories are largely left out or overly flattened, including the one Jemila and I had shared together. This paper is our desire to redress that omission in some catalytic if not transgressive way.

The question we started with was "How do we cultivate equity and dignity in third spaces?" To respond to that question, and trusting Jemila, I asked her to choose a number of

individuals to tell their story about this third space of engagement. She was mindful to choose individuals whose stories added further vision to her own. The process would involve me meeting each of these individuals three times over the course of about five weeks—first to get acquainted, share the intentions of this work, and brainstorm stories to offer the conversation, a second time to speak those stories, and a third conversation to round out the discussion across the group and to get feedback on the synthesis you'll read below. The assumption we were making is that not only could these individuals add their vision to this third-space, but also that their perspectives might help us understand many of the messes we find ourselves in there.

In response to the question above concerning what it takes to cultivate equity and dignity, we didn't find a hard and fast answer, nor did we expect to find one. As you'll come to see we're not offering a list of best practices or a prescription to follow steps one through ten. If that's what you think you need, then you better search elsewhere. Rather, we're offering a story—a story that we all need to reckon with if we're to respond, each of us as ourselves, in our particular work and lives to the question above. In my opinion this story isn't told often enough—this story, this threshold is often shut out of academic discussion.

*...told from other perspectives*

One consequence of meeting Jemila was that I became more and more aware of the conversations I wasn't having—the stories I hadn't heard. With time, our stories about race, class, privilege, and transformative change opened new possible worlds for me. I learned new languages and cultures necessary to build an "Us" where this conversation could keep going. This perspective that we (or if you'd rather, I in the plural) nurtured, was a consistent conversation among a good number of people in Tompkins County, NY. Yet, I would rarely meet this perspective on campus, nor would I often hear such a character's voice in the scholarship of engagement. Randy Stoecker and Elizabeth Tryon(2009) named the voices that nurtured the We in I, *The Unheard Voices* speaking of how these conversations were institutionally hushed. A question Jemila and I wrestled with was if, why, and how to share

some of our story—and with whom. This latter question bore greatly on the particular sharing of what you’re about to read which is contained in the institutionalized space of a dissertation.

Individuals that Jemila sent me to had experiences to share about their interactions with a number of area institutions, including among others the university itself and the research project Jemila and I are involved in as well. Why would anyone want to share that story with me? Mind you that Jemila had asked that question of me before. Ever since she asked me that question, and I stupidly thought I had a good answer, I’ve tried to approach that question, spoken or unspoken from others with a very broad openness. I built relationships with a great many people in Tompkins County precisely because I was less sure of what my role ought to be or could be. That time consuming lesson served me well. I knew a good number of the people Jemila pointed me toward—and they knew me. We shared a certain understanding and a certain trust that was hard earned. In the moments where I didn’t know someone very well, I made that apparent and we tried to start knowing one another as best we could. In other words this work didn’t start with a research question.

As I mentioned, thirteen individuals in all contributed to this project, fourteen if you include me. However, since Jemila and I were interested in deeper understandings of this collaborative work, even if people’s experience hit rather close to home, I’ve kept all of the contributions confidential in this paper. I’ve also included no direct quotes. I wanted everyone to have the opportunity to take some risk in sharing their story, a risk we all, including me, could try to share. After interviewing each individual, listening to their recorded voices again and again I’ve both created and tried to tell a particular story, a collective story from a particular perspective that I’ve gleaned from in between their stories. You’ll see that synthesis in *italics* below and the words we shared during those five weeks suffuse the entire text. The words and stories are borrowed, remixed, rehashed but not in my reading far removed from their original tone and intent. After the general synthesis of these stories I revisited everyone and we shared some more thoughts. All individuals involved have approved of the general thesis this paper presents. However, in not including verbatim voices there’s a certain level of

trust that both the participants, and you as a reader must grant me. I wanted to respect and appreciate these stories that were so freely given and not turn them or their storytellers into “objects” to be exposed and dissected. This is a constant dilemma in writing about people in general. However as you’ll see, the stories below adamantly resist this “othering” and “objectifying” practice—if not always in their form, then in their content. To clarify that, before I move on, it’s important say a few things about who these individuals are—including the kind of characters they often represent in “engagement stories.”

The previous and the current sections collectively set this paper in, “The third space of engagement...told from other perspectives.” The choice of the phrase “other perspectives” intends to highlight two things. One, as I’ve mentioned these stories aren’t often heard in peer-reviewed discourse. And two, the individuals who have shared their stories are regularly personified or objectified in the peer-reviewed discourse as “others.” The perception this paper tries to speak from is that these individuals are regularly spoken of, but not necessarily heard. In peer-reviewed discourse these individuals are representatives of community-based organizations—they’re “network nodes,” and possessors of social capital. They’re community champions and gatekeepers—representatives and tokens. In this paper they are all of these characters and none of these characters. They’re I and Us. They’re storytellers—just as we all are.

When I think of the stories I heard, and share below, my experience with collaborative work floods my mind. In this way, I see stories as a kind of threshold that anyone can offer, and through which anyone can see something different and still true. At the end of this chapter I try to draw some of my own truths and my own lessons from these narratives. You should do likewise, and if inclined share some of what you see in the online version of this text. Hopefully there and elsewhere we can see these stories offering different horizons for our public work. I think we should each be searching for these stories, and telling our own. The stories that We or I have built below offer just a beginning. Don’t go into them searching for rulebooks or best practices—though lessons abound. This sharing of stories is a relational and immanent

medium—as all art is. I believe my role and your role is to look upon these stories as a way to glimpse a goodness that is outside of rules. These stories are thresholds as I mentioned in the preface. Through these we can each see and seek more stories, and retell our own, among friends and neighbors who you may not yet know.

Now, taking all of this preamble, I'll finally get to these stories that I believe speak for themselves. You'll notice I haven't interrupted these words with copious academic verification. In my view, and for the time being, that would misplace power, knowledge, and our responsibility. Rather I speak emphatically, without second guesses—hoping you'll fully listen and receive, and welcome the ideas, discussion, and creativity such acts can foster thereafter.

The stories I'll (re)tell below speak these morals:

*It takes relationships to know yourself amid the presence of the past. But, institutions fear otherness—a fear that colonizes potentially transformative spaces, stifling our individual creativity and passions. Yet we are reclaiming power in small, distinct, and autonomous groups, where our individual voices begin to weave our We.*

I'll take the morals of these stories in turn, sharing glimpses of the perspectives they come from. The stories you see below are not direct quotes but fictions bearing resemblance to real events. In the *italics* below I've slipped into my own storytelling vernacular, which is equal parts snide humor, and southern colloquial. The idea is that you can see these stories, and why they're told. Ideally we could all learn how and when to tell these stories, to ourselves and maybe others, as appropriate. I can't claim to have accomplished that below. However, I'd encourage you to stick with these stories—even if you want to throw them across the room. Some of them intend to get your blood boiling. Personally, I have been, and often continue to be, the one who screws up in regards these stories. It's just now that I can see it better, and it's just now that I have a community of friends in which I can own having screwed up.

A final note I'll add given some early reviews of this manuscript is that as you read these words you may feel like I'm dragging you into the woods. Who you are and what you should

be doing might become a lot less clear to you. Some of you may feel lost. That's okay. These stories make the case that you've always been in the woods and that navigating your relationships with the trees and the rest of us is a lot messier than most stories let you in on. These are stories that don't give you simple answers. These are stories about the woods, in all its wild and unbridled beauty. For some of you getting lost in that will feel like home. For others, toward the end of these stories you might feel some trepidation. Toward the end, I'll try to offer what I can, a humble modicum of comfort and an invitation to share some good company. Yet, I will never intend to lead you, or us, out of the woods.

### **It takes relationships...**

I'm sure we've all been in a planning discussion where someone says "We need more people at the table." Whatever the reasons, we often find ourselves not having the experiences or knowledges necessary to discuss this or that subject, or actualize this or that change without having people that are smarter than us or who represent different perspectives than we do. This story, or some version of it, is behind the most general maxim of collaborative work: "It takes relationships."

Despite that general claim there's often not much discussion around the planning table about what kind of relationships are being referred to. As a result, here's how a good number of people mentioned this story can play out:

*The group, or someone in the group, points out that so and so's opinions aren't being brought into the discussion. The group agrees and realizes nobody around the table can speak to or from that perspective. Now instead of stopping there with a big question of why those present are even at the table in the first place, the idea comes to bring in a representative of such and such group.*

*Let's say we're talking about a campus group and they don't have any community voices at the table. Well, they'll bring in someone who has those community relationships,*

*probably someone who represents low-income neighborhoods or people of color—a leader, a spokesperson—namely Us. They may even give Us a stipend.*

*Now, recognize this isn't a stopgap until a time when the people around the table, the people who are really paid to be at the table, do have the relationships necessary to speak with this or that perspective. This is a move where, after recognizing they don't have the relationships—recognizing they don't understand the folks they're talking about, these planners decide to farm out the relational work. This is them saying, we need someone who's not us in here. To think that's the right answer or the sustainable answer to not understanding your neighbor is grotesque.*

*Even if you come to that table as this representative, think of how impossible a job that is. Try and make a recommendation to everyone around the table that they work to build these relationships to this or that community themselves and see how many folks say, they don't have those skills, and besides, they don't have the time or don't get paid or rewarded to do that kind of work. Then you'll see what they really expect you to do. You're the "It" man.*

Some version of this story came up on regular occasion over the five weeks of conversations I had. We talked at length about two problems this story brings up in day-to-day work. The first issue is how untenable this role of representational and relational "other" is—I'll discuss that here. The second is how the whole idea misunderstands what the work is all about.

Let's say, as per the story, you're this relational other that's invited to the table. You're charged with representing, not yourself but, what you know better than anyone at the table as, a heterogeneous community. Imagine what it feels like to be the one. Perhaps it feels good to be in the spotlight—maybe a honeymoon ensues. But realize you have to perform for both the front and the back of the house now. If you don't play ball with the group that called you to the

meeting, the group that might be paying you, you're a gatekeeper. You play too much ball with that group and you might just be a hypocrite at best and a poverty pimp at worst.

It'd be one thing to play this role of surrogate relationship builder for a limited amount of time. It'd also be a different issue if you, and more people with relationships like you, had "real" seats at the table. But neither seems to be on the agenda or payroll. It takes some real skill and practice to play that professional in-between role, and play it well, for the long term. You can get chewed up in the middle—and then you can really start to question whether it's worth it and for whom. Dependent on where you come from, know to pay or accept that stipend if it's the good thing to do for the time, but don't fool yourself into thinking this is how the good work, the transformative work, the long-haul work, gets done.

*...to know yourself...*

The second concern we discussed that comes out of the story above is how it reinforces the original group's approach to "the work."

As with most project-based convenings, the meetings around the table are to fulfill the objectives laid out in the plan. Very rarely, does "know yourself" and know one another feature prominently on the agenda. Ice-breaking trust-falls don't count. Time and again, stories over these five weeks would touch on how individuals came to know themselves through relationships with other people. It bears noting that many of the individuals I spoke with were born into a certain in-between-ness. This question of identity is central to our stories about what it takes to do the relational work of community organizing, or community engagement. I think it's fair to say that those stories need to be shared among everyone so we can better attend to this I-Thou relationship.

Yet, as the case represented above points out, if a person who wants to do work with, for, or on people mentions they don't have the time or aren't rewarded to do relational work it becomes pretty clear that they're not adequately committed to the I-Thou idea. For experts, maybe it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking one's job doesn't involve relational work. Experts



might know *people in general* without knowing *people in particular*—that kind of knowledge is what they're accountable to. Expertise, in alluding to my own story in Chapter One, can assume that one can do right by someone if one understands this someone's general situation, rather than understanding some one, and oneself, in particular. An expert, in rebuffing a request to take on relational work might fuel the assumption that this particular busybody hasn't done the self-work or isn't interested in continuing that work with others. Knowing folks on both sides of this story, as I do, I can attest that a great number of people on the community-campus divide for instance have started that self-work but hesitate to show it to one another. Those stories are vulnerable, and perhaps some think they shouldn't have to be so personal about the work. What's worse is if we posture about the self-work we've done over there or in the past—it makes it seem that the here and now, we just don't have time for, or our skills are beyond this idle getting to know one another. If we ignore these muscles of relating to each one and another, in any of our work, then it shows up every day. As with many muscles, if you don't use it, you lose it. If relating is an art we might fall out of practice, or assume a mundane routine—we can get into ruts. It's akin to a jazz musician in a quartet not playing her trumpet, or more likely not playing it in rhythm with everyone else. The last thing she should do when the rest of the band asks her why, is say, "Oh trust me, we're good. I played jazz with my real band last week." Practice and performance in the here and now is the only way to get a sense of where you can fit into and shape the composition.

The time commitment necessary to do this I-Thou work is the hardest and most inconvenient truth to the whole idea of a three-year project timeline—so much so that the project-based idea might seem laughable. It's often a big span this relational bridge has to stretch across. The I and Thou can live quite different realities. At least in the beginning, I might not let my work follow me home, and Thou might have to. And vice versa. It takes time to develop the fellow-feeling that sustains Us. Instead, the deliverable deadlines approach and we just don't have time to get to know one another—or by extension, more broadly know ourselves. We stick to the agenda, and press on with "the work" that leaves Us out of it.

Focused on where we should be, we don't each know where we've been or where we are, just that We aren't *there* yet.

*...amid the presence of the past.*

This rush toward the future where the project objectives have been neatly completed is spurred on in many areas of collaborative work. This haste seems to miss one central lesson a number of people offered in their stories. History, can offer a good guide forward. And our knowledge of one another's history goes a long way to building relationships and knowing ourselves. Not only did a focus on personal history play a role in each individual's self-work and self-care, a more collective history also provided grounding for what one sees in the now. History is a useful guide as one navigates many choices in collaborative politics. This kind of politics is rather old after all. People have been doing collaborative politics for quite some time and many thought we would do well to revisit some of those lessons. Yet many stories mentioned encountering a reticence among institutional players to share their personal history, as well as some reservations around discussing and questioning their complicity in their institution's history. Such reluctant players would much rather start from blank slates than the messy past.

Consequently the word *sankofa* bore discussing in our conversations—this Akan term can be literally translated as “go back and get it.” It's often associated with the proverb “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi” translated as “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten”(The Spirituals Project, 2014). This proverb, which also plays a role in Yoruba creation stories survived the Middle Passage and we can hear it everyday in the saying “You can't know where you're going unless you know where you come from” and some variants thereof. I'm rather fond of Terry Pratchett's(2011) version in *I Shall Wear Midnight*:

*If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong (p. 423).*

Now, in regards the above, I don't believe that anyone can ever have or should want a crystal clear history or even a rock-solid (read, inert) idea of where they come from. But that's no excuse for not taking this proverb for what it is. The incomplete nature of history is no excuse for not approaching this relational work in search of a fuller self and a curiosity toward that potential in one another. In regards that work we're flying blind without our past. Our histories—oral, official, and apocryphal—are unavoidable even if, and especially if, we try to ignore them. If histories aren't on the table, rest uneasy in knowing they're under it. Without some sharing of our stories we might wrongly assume ourselves synonymous with our passing interactions—our fleeing and fleeting moments. We are the completed budget report, the education program, the grating microaggression, the logic model, the passerby that nods in the hallway. We need an antidote for that stale bread. History, as a tool, might just help us knit this tragedy into a recognizable if imperfect tapestry. History can help us reconsider what we mean by relationships, and “the work”, and our selves—hopefully in a way that doesn't give us those flat characters I so often read in engagement stories.

That's where this first story leaves me—in the woods. I never expected to find such a condemnation of the way institutions so often think about doing work in a more participatory fashion. This story points out that institutional projects often just propose a modicum of representative democracy through minimally honoring some relational other. That story, from the perspectives shared here, is tantamount to either a tragedy or a farce. The role of the go-between is a necessary stopgap at best—not a sustainable solution. This farming out of relationships also fuels the assumption that our work is external to us. If we keep that assumption going, our fuller selves get lopped off in the process. Histories, and stories such as these, can offer some starting point for getting serious about this mess we find ourselves in. I have a hope that histories are a starting point for getting some sense of who we are, where we are, and how we might ought to be going. Histories and story sharing might begin the long-haul work of fellow feeling, an idea that a great many engagement stories might shirk for some reason. In the next story I'll point to why, without taking that time for fellow feeling, I am likely

to approach Thou as an It. Even if I don't intend to, I'll likely approach you with fear. This fear plays itself out regularly in institutions that many of us in engagement work might associate ourselves with everyday.

**But institutions fear otherness—...**

It's common knowledge that we are liable to fear what we don't know as well as fear what we can't control. It should then come as no surprise that many religious traditions around the world (along with some atheisms and secular philosophies) have a central aim to subdue this fear through faith. Indeed, it requires faith to approach the unknown and the uncontrollable with a heart full of love, and a vision of thanksgiving. I could go on about how this love, upon being institutionalized, defeats its own purposes but I'll speak to that at length in Chapter Six. Here, I'm sticking to the stories we could hear all around us everyday.

The next sentence of this paper's thesis tries to convey how this fear of the unknown and uncontrollable plays out on a day-to-day basis in collaborative work. The moral is, "But institutions fear otherness—a fear that colonizes potentially transformative spaces, stifling our individual creativity and passions." This moral is resultant of a second story I bore witness to throughout the five weeks of talking with people. The story can go something like this.

*One thing we'd do well to recognize is that most of Us, we network nodes and community champions, began as reluctant leaders. Once upon a time we saw something that needed done and we just did it. We had our regular 9 to 5 and then we did our neighborly work on top of that. We started out being our own bosses, with some of that open freedom, and from there we learned more and eventually we might have really been enjoying ourselves and getting stuff done.*

*If you're in that place of getting stuff done, people start noticing you. If you're not considered too obstreperous, and have enough "other" mystique maybe you're invited to one of those "get people to the table moments" we talked about. Now, remember that the*

*folks around the table probably don't understand you, or the work you do—that's why you're there. The other reason you're there is because you can get stuff done. Now not always, but pretty often, you end up there because they need you to help them get something done that they can't do themselves. They need you to work for them.*

*But again, they don't understand you or the work you do. Here's where it gets twisted. Them not knowing you, or your work, often translates into them wanting you to do the work for them, in the way they're accustomed to understanding work. If you're not getting paid to work for them that's one thing, but once you're a paid and institutionalized representative you're put under a whole new set of relationships.*

*You've now got to account for the work you do. You have to keep track of the hours you work when you know damn well there's no punch clock for neighborly living. You have to write weekly reports to assuage these institutional fears of you not doing anything. They don't understand the work you do, yet they're consistently afraid that you're doing it wrong or not at all. So, you have to count the number of people benefitting from your work, knowing damn well that contact numbers aren't the issue. You're stuck doing evaluations of whether your program is valid by external standards—knowing damn well that's not how to decide if the truths of your relationships are worth sharing, or investing more resources in. You're now in a position of having to explain yourself to a bunch of folks that don't understand you or your work—and it may seem like really, when it comes down to it—they're not interested in taking to heart how you really do the work of building community. They don't have time to do that kind of work, that's not what they're paid to do. Sometimes it may seem like they're just paid to make your life more complicated than it needs to be.*

*I have a friend, who was working a regular 9 to 5 washing dishes and spreading the neighborly love on the side. He got sucked up into this institutionalized situation because*

*he was one of those relationship builders. This institution paid him \$12 an hour for 35 hours a week to be their outreach coordinator. At first, that was pretty exciting getting paid to do the work he loved. But now, he's spending half his time trying to comfort this institution that constantly thinks they're being taken advantage of. When he was making two dollars less an hour washing dishes and doing his neighborly work on the side, he didn't have anyone trying to manage his life, or question his choices or commitment to his community. More than that, washing dishes, he could work overtime if he had to and get paid for it.*

*He left that outreach position a year ago and went back to washing dishes. He told me he's "just a little too free spirited for the other folks around the table."*

*It told him that they just didn't trust him. Misunderstanding the work the way they did, they couldn't trust him. They figured his accountability to his community should look a whole lot more like their accounting spreadsheets.*

Once again, stories much like this came up in my conversations over those five weeks. Sadly, the fear at the center of this story is not only possible in our individual hearts—but the choice to fear what we don't know can be made in spite of us through institutionalized ways of relating to the world. Once again, I discuss the roots of this fear at length in Chapter Six and I won't repeat myself here. Rather I'll discuss how this fear shows up in many I-It relationships between self and other.

*...a fear that colonizes potentially transformative spaces...*

At the end of the narrative above I pointed toward the lenses of accounting and accountability which a number of us discussed during the interviews and feedback sessions on this draft. It's one thing to seek understanding about how to better relate with those around you in mutually beneficial ways. For me, this simple definition of accountability, is a deeply individual question that requires continuous conversation with people. In many ways the

conversations I had over those five weeks asked this accountability question while trying to practice it—and I found folks were pretty interested in that conversation. Accounting, we decided, is different. To oversimplify things, whereas accountability is an I-Thou question, accounting seeks an I-It answer. The accountant tries to understand It—this relational work in a neat and tidy little package. You might be hesitant to entertain this oversimplified dichotomy. So I'll just say before I describe this further that this tidiness, this It relationship, is not evil. Yet if we come to only understand the work as an It—most often in academic parlance a “program”—we erase what is possibly the most central piece of the work—its messy, dynamic, creative and human element.

As the stories shared, counting hours, counting participants, counting dollars and cents, amounts to a very superficial quantitative knowing of a program. This knowledge, along with a very clear qualitative vision of a program's goals and how members attain them, their theories of causation and change, encompass the tidy package in which institutions, and Western social science are accustomed to accounting for their work and the work of others. This understanding of a program as an “It,” as a certain piece in a system, is not only required by many funding agencies, this practice can be a helpful internal conversation to have in the development of an idea. Yet it always leaves out a great deal. Furthermore, if accounting practice is born of a fear, either of things not going right or being broken, this project of knowing “It” *forces* out a great deal.

The operating metaphors in this scene of fearful accounting resemble “how does It work, what makes It tick, how can we make sure It is working correctly, and if/when that's not the case how can we fix It.” It's an overly mechanized theme of questions and intentions. For someone at a distance from such reality this metaphor may make sense. In contrast, for someone who, in many ways, embodies this idea, program, or character—a reluctant leader or director of a community-based organization—such mechanical metaphors can be terrifying. Dwell on this difference for a little while. A common discussion I've borne witness to throughout the last four years of relational work surrounds the paradox that for some people

“this work” is just a program or project, for others “this work” is their lives. Institutions looking to understand this work as an It, subsuming the program and/or a human under that pronoun, are literally dehumanizing the work. Unsurprisingly the people I’ve spoken with were hesitant to be complicit in such dehumanizing metaphors. These metaphors turn Us into technicians, or worse, human cogs in a much grander scheme.

Unfortunately this colonization of third spaces by fear, isn’t only held in classic institutions of universities, hospitals, or the state. It’s also become part and parcel of the more recent surge in the nonprofit industrial complex. Organizations that may start, even in the mode of reluctant leadership, as charitable endeavors, can come to operate in this programmed way. Particularly when such organizations become larger, they become indiscernible from for-profit businesses—complete with marketing gimmicks, hierarchical delegation, proprietary development models, fees for service, and inaccessible knowledge management systems. As small non-for-profits liaise with large funders who request annual reports and measures, they too can internalize these practices of seeing their work and lives through programmed eyes.

Once again these accounting measures aren’t in and of themselves evil—they are just tools. The struggle is in using these tools to enable good work rather than allowing these tools to dictate what good work ought to look like. In such a way these tools should vivify our creativity rather than squander it. These tools should open possibilities for movement rather than ossify channels of most efficient and appropriate flow. However institutions stand accused of imprudently using these accounting tools—colonizing third spaces with their fearful ways of knowing. For many I’ve spoken with, the intellectual project of understanding relational work as an It, and the environment such a myopia creates, is debilitating.

*...stifling our individual creativity and passions.*

A number of the thirteen individuals I’ve spoken with have begun to actively avoid more institutionalized third spaces. The fear and distrust I spoke of above featured strongly in reasons for going and staying away. For some, these spaces simply weren’t useful to the work



they were interested in doing. It's tragic that individuals speak fondly of their excitement at entering collaborative spaces, yet note this excitement and creativity is too often squandered as the space becomes both dead and mandatory. People feel invisible and unheard. Trappings of accountancy and control have ways of hampering our creative spirit, making these third spaces feel soul-trapping. We get stuck in meetings. We get stuck in planning the last detail. We wear blinders so focused on what's next that we can't reflect on what's happening. We sit evaluating for external discernment—trying to defensively prove ourselves rather than internally nurturing ourselves and growing as individuals.

For me these stories conveyed some of the paralyzing effects of fear. Let's face it, we're often afraid of getting things wrong. We don't want to screw up. We don't want to look or feel dumb. We don't want to repeat the missteps of the past. In such a fear we set high expectations for ourselves. We suppose we must get clear about racism, and sexism, and classism, and urbanism, so we can rise above all of these problems and leap into the future. When we don't live up to this vision—our failures are confirmed, our fears reinforced, our cynicisms grow deeper, our critiques become ever more sharp. We might "know" more about the quagmires we're faced with but have less and less hope of getting out of them. In a word—we're stuck. In my experience, it's a very smart kind of stuck in Tompkins County.

Unfortunately, just hearing the two stories above might amplify your fear of getting things wrong in the relational work of engagement. By all means inform your worries in all of this relational work, but don't take the challenges these stories bring up as insurmountable. It reminds me of the parallel text in Chapter Three. I described meeting Jemila, being confronted with my own story from another perspective, coming to a stop, and then getting really "smart" about the cultural terrain I was a part of. Then, "like a grasshopper after a molt I felt a fuller sense of myself yet one that left me weak and vulnerable—fragile." I could add that this fuller sense of myself left me fearful. You'll remember I stayed inside. I could have stayed there indefinitely. I can at any time, as you can, stay in that place. We could all easily admit that it's just impossible to do this kind of work, given where and who we are. We can always reaffirm

apathy by critique and separation. Or, we can start surmounting our fears, faithfully, bit by bit, in small but life-affirming ways. That's how we hold on to hope.

### **Yet we are reclaiming power...**

Time and again our conversations focused on spaces that were, for some reason, different than the two stories above. In these spaces many described the importance of self-care and self-work in the journey toward knowing themselves better. We discussed the art of moving between the many spaces surrounding our lives to sustain Us in various ways. Below I've tried to relate that story.

*Every space is a third space when you come to think about it. Every encounter is an opportunity to meet and share—take care of yourself or get riled up if need be. The trick is learning how to move between different spaces with a good mix of intentionality and unintended grace—building in yourself a fuller sense of Us and taking that with you wherever you go.*

*Now, we know that everyone has their tribe in some way. There's a group where you feel more at home, and at ease. My friend mentioned she had that group in college. She went to an all-women's college and found a group focused on women in the STEM fields. It was an enclave, a safe space of sorts where she and her friends could share their experience, and assure themselves they weren't crazy for highlighting the paternalism and sexism of the science fields. It was a space for self-care and building solidarity with one another. She mentioned it was a relief to not have to spend ninety percent of her time trying to convince someone of something they just weren't interested in hearing. In this enclave—they got it. That space supported her, provided her with peers and mentors, and discussion that just wasn't out there in the everyday rigmarole of Structures 101. Hopefully we all have those spaces where we can let our hair down for a little bit and breathe—even if it's alone with our noses in a book.*

*Yet those safe spaces, those known spaces where everyone is on the same or a similar page can only do so much. They may reinforce the fact that I'm different from all that out there, and they don't always pursue the fact that there's more to discover about myself out there. That search for more me out there, is the space of transformation.*

*Some folks think that's the place of collaborative politics where you discover all the other groups. Here is the big tent meeting where these particular groups come together and lobby their opinions. Somehow these particular groups are supposed to find something in common and then do that. I'm not convinced. Those big tent meetings often lend themselves to particular groups bickering about who gets pie—that's transaction. Those spaces aren't working and they need "work" as I've talked about previously. But the work they need isn't big tent work, and it's not just enclave work either. It's small group work where some of the trappings of institutional partnership can give way to personal relationships. There we can find more of ourselves on the bridge between one another.*

*I'll give my example. Two years ago I moved to the North End neighborhood of Detroit. I had my enclaves, my "in-groups" if you will, where I could "be" myself. For the most part, these were folks that looked like me, talked like me, and biked like me. Yet the neighborhood I'd moved into was decidedly not those three things. I started living in a neighborhood that was predominantly African American elders living on a fixed income. I'm grateful that I've had the chance to build relationships with my neighbors—not only through the neighborhood meetings but also because I'm the only person on my block under 35 years old that can both replace a toilet and carry the old one to the community garden to use as a planter.*

*Now don't get me wrong, this was and is no Kumbaya kind of neighborhood relationship. Given the gentrification of Detroit, especially over the past five years, my entrance into a predominantly low-income African American neighborhood was rightfully met with*

*some important questions. Folks living here for three generations have experiences I didn't, and often still don't, understand. Their realities are different than mine and I've been clumsy on more than two dozen occasions while trying to figure out who I was in regards my neighborhood. It's an open and uncomfortable question but it's a question that, thankfully, I'm learning more about. Rather than a space where I can "be" myself, this is a space where I'm "becoming" myself in ways I didn't necessarily expect.*

*Every week I find myself moving between these various groups. I'll say that I'm privileged to move amid these groups. At times I might even consider myself having a knack for it—before falling flat on my face. I also recognize the responsibility I have to use that privilege in better ways and have folks keeping me accountable to it. In particular I see a lot of my responsibility in having tough conversations among my white friends and groups where, in some ways, my own healing had to start.*

*Over the past two years I've been able to put more of my experience back into practice. I've come to know stories of my colleagues, my neighbors, my family, and my friends. Through all of these I've discovered a broader sense of who I am. It's not a "project." It's just me. Hopefully, through my failing and learning, it's a better me.*

The threads of this story I'd like to bring forward have roots in all of the conversations I pursued as part of this work. These different third spaces that people spoke of—spaces of transformative self-work—had quite a bit in common despite how different they could be. With the sections below I'll share some points we discussed in our conversations about coming to, learning from, and going between these small groups. I've brought myself into this discussion a little more as I try to relive some of my own experience and prefigure some of my future in the Detroit narrative above. The lessons I'll share in regards this story formed much of the basis for the trust I've begun to share with people in Tompkins County. That trust, in particular was what enabled me to listen to, learn from, and hear the stories these thirteen people spoke to me.

The lessons I'll share from this collective story are ones I'll take forward into Detroit. And they are lessons, stories, thresholds, that I hope you can see your own work in and through. To start out, I'll briefly describe how you might find yourself coming into these transformative spaces before moving on to why they might work and what they can accomplish.

*...in small, distinct, and autonomous groups...*

The spaces of self-work aren't mandatory spaces. Folks related to me that you can't make anyone learn about themselves if they're not interested in doing that. While one has to make time and effort to know one's self, it bears noting that some spaces nurture that exploration better than others. As many I spoke with mentioned, and as my own story in Chapter Three corroborates, we often get brought into this space of self-transformation with a jolt we can't yet process. I've been told that for privileged folks that jolt comes much later in life as it did for me. The fright that can come from these moments requires some safety which in the narrative above I storied as an enclave. For me that enclave, that self-work, started in books and small groups of mostly white friends that could help me process what I was feeling in regard to my race and privilege. A number of people pointed to these close-knit groups, even if it's just between two friends, as a hospitable place where they started some of that self-work with a focus on self-care. If you have a large number of acquaintances you'll find out soon enough who's ready to help in that conversation and who's not. You'll find a smaller group where you can talk about this or that without spending all your time fishing for similarly curious friends in the crowd.

There's no real list of agenda items in this small space other than what you feel you need to learn more about. If you're lucky you have friends that check in with you about how you're doing. Hopefully they know when to push and when to leave you be. They become better friends—the ones you call when stuff comes up. I hope everybody has these groups. They're small, distinct and autonomous. They can be challenging in their own way. But, they're comfortable. They're home for people.

But discomfort is what drove you there. And discomfort is still out there. It's time to embrace it best you can. Likely through happenstance and grace you'll be put in a situation where you get to interact outside of your comfort zone—with people you don't yet know. You can sense apprehension and fear on your part. But you make a choice to get to know someone and perhaps you find something in common interest. I've storied the above as some others have in finding that somebody in a neighbor. For others, someone who began as a work colleague blossomed into something more. For others, they found a close group around some other interest or vocation. Maybe you met at one of those big tent meetings. You become friends of some sort—but often challenging friends. You may work together on this or that, focusing on small achievable goals and celebrating small successes even though you may not talk about your time together like that. You're building some trust and faith in one another despite your first sense of difference.

You begin to test more waters and build up a certain confidence and humility about meeting new people that see the world from a different space. You come to know yourself in the small circle of different groups. Before too long, you might have a cadre of these little groups where you fit for some reason or another.

Again there's no real list of agenda items in these small spaces other than what you feel you need to learn more about. If you're lucky you have more friends that check in with you about how you're doing. Hopefully they know when to push and when to leave you be. They become better friends—the one's you call when stuff comes up. I hope everybody has these groups. They're small, distinct and autonomous. They can become challenging in their own way. But, they become comfortable. They become home for people.

However, you're exactly correct if you think all of this talk about spaces for self-care, and self-work sounds a bit too romantic. What I mentioned above, that space of no agenda freedom is beautiful but fragile. If you come to value this work of getting to know yourself in and with people that don't share your reality you'll notice how much work it takes to attend to these multiple relationships and multiple accountabilities. You'll learn how hard it can be to

practice deep friendship. You'll have to learn the role of being a host, and with it the art of hospitality. Still, these spaces are prone to colonization from the outside—you come to guard your heart against committing that and can come to fear that invasion from others. In this way groups, and your membership within them can become insular and decrepit—finding ways forward is a struggle. You'll come to learn, through faith, that love involves a good deal of that struggle.

What became clear for me, over the four years I've known Jemila, and the five weeks of working with these thirteen individuals and their stories, was that a certain breed of engagement defied the logic of snappy objectives and goals. Furthermore, the human-agency-filled future these stories aimed at, defied the *modus operandi* of many public institutions who were first and foremost there to get the work done. In some regards, these stories I heard and shared over the five weeks lacked faith in public institutions, or the big tent. Perhaps that lack of faith was necessary for us to nurture places to put faith and find faith in people themselves—more to the point, to find faith in *our selves*. The individual voice became the focus. The individual first-person multi-vocal voice came to the fore, both as these storytellers described themselves and what they sought in their many-grouped lives.

*...where our individual voices...*

Why these small, distinct, and autonomous groups work well in transformative change isn't so complicated or foreign to our daily lives. In small circles we can hear ourselves speak, we can see the impact of our own voice on our friends. We can attend to relationships. We can see how we might do right and do wrong by people. We can see how we achieve things together.

We all have these spaces I hope—whether in our homes, with our families, with our friends, in a bar, or in the small classroom or job. We learn how to navigate these spaces to meet any number of needs and aspirations. We also know that these small spaces surprise us on regular occasion. In contrast, the big tent is full of crowds—the senses that lend themselves to

hospitality and surprise are turned down or formalized into rules for playing nice. You're only permitted to speak your voice from the crowd, to the crowd. Somehow at the end of the day, you often feel your voice has been lost. As a number of stories noted: you're invisible. Yet we keep setting these meetings because they're the most efficient and convenient way to get the work done? We don't have time for this small relationships stuff because we're too busy in meetings?

Maybe we should just admit that these small groups may be invisible spaces to the grand scheme—they aren't official enough to warrant much notice. But these spaces not only help you hear and feel the impact of your own voice, in your moving between small groups your voice is transformed. You're encountering more perspectives, the rhizomes of self-knowing. You're learning how to fit a bigger sense of Us into yourself. Ideally you can move between spaces where self-care or self-work take precedent—little cycles of reflection and action, molting and moving that allow Us (or I in the plural) to grow in you and around you. Sadly, as some noted, enclaves of self-care are fleeting in the everyday life of community work. A number cited those spaces being undervalued, colonized, or taken away—other times they get too clubbish or exclusive and rot.

In an ideal world, which is a world we spoke of striving for, small groups would be rightly supported for what they are—places where we can learn of ourselves and witness ourselves grow. They'd be an unrepeatable mix of clash and hospitality where we could challenge ourselves and care for ourselves—where we could find a fuller sense of our individual humanity. It's a paradox that this work isn't deemed to be valuable enough.

*...begin to weave our we.*

In our conversations we returned to these small spaces as nurturing the self-knowing that's too often brushed aside in third space interactions with institutions. Perhaps institutions aren't ready for that journey. Yet those roads are where we find hope and see hope. The deeply personal work of weaving our individual strands is where our conversations found their



response for sustaining public work and public lives. We're not the only group that's speaking this story. In my last meeting with each individual before writing this synopsis I often mentioned a poem by Akua (the pen name of Carol Bebel) called *Weaving our WE*. I think Akua's poem can help me gather a few lessons I plan to take forward in this work of engagement.

### ***Weaving our WE***

*Since, that parting at the start,  
from our safest home and anchor  
WE yearn for belonging.*

*Soon, human touch defines our new sense of intimacy becoming a good  
exchange for our first sanctuary.  
Familiar, though not the same,  
It soothes and inspires us  
to begin our necessary launch to living.*

*Holding fast at first, then tentative, to our new shores of connection,  
WE begin our dance of cleaving to, yet holding from, those like us  
Who are also seeking their own delicate balance to life.*

*With every fiber of our spirit, WE struggle to become able to be alone, yet part of those who help  
us know our emerging selves.  
They mostly look like us, sound like us and ...WE become like them.*

*WE are so satisfied with this way of being, till the day that new presence shows up and WE start  
to feel the pull to be with this new discovered pleasure  
Though different, WE bask in it.*

*WE flirt with it. It makes us laugh, feel good, reluctant to leave.*

*Call it neighbor, friend, teacher, or just community, Now, a needed part of our happy.  
So, our life long collecting of others begins  
More and more to choose from, to add to our anchoring, our tending of self and our expanded self,  
called WE.*

*Yes, WE sense the difference from those first ones, the ones WE once needed so much, called  
family.*

*Once taken for granted, now, WE fear the risk of losing either one or the other*

*So.... WE learn this ritual, this flirtatious dance of catching spirits, collecting people  
Adding them over and over to our WE.  
And WE grow better and better at this graceful effort,  
The new ones pull us, push, shape us, helping define us.  
This scares us but also propels us, helping to anchor us, find our center, test our bonds of  
connection...belonging.*

*WE lose some along the way, yet WE continue the dance, ever searching and collecting the ones for our WE.*

*Some stay, some leave, some melt into us.  
Absent minded, automatic, like breathing sometimes.*

*But, also Intentional, like a patient weaver, WE hold the common thread while adding color, pattern, to loop together in the making of our unique design for life.*

*Oh but WE are not always careful to make sure that the design and structure can tolerate contrast, resistance, unexpected and compelling sweet distractions.*

*For these...these, in the end, make our life more fulfilling, satisfying and ...worth the living!*

*--Akua (aka Carol Bebel)*

For the final portion of this chapter I'll speak to how the thirteen individuals I spoke with over the course of five weeks influence my reading of the poem above. In the poem I hear a beginning in the familiar, more specifically the maternal womb both warm and comforting from which we can first learn to depend on another for our care, our identity, and our meaning. This is our common story of infancy—an embrace in the familiar. As Akua says, this space “soothes and inspires us.” Of course we can think about this familiar place as representing our actual family, but we can also see this place representing our more particular communities, our “home” disciplines, our job environments, our inner circle. In my own experience over the past six years I've come to see my discipline of popular (adult) education as a kind of familiar home—my colleagues and mentors in that work comfort and inspire me. Yet if I rest idle in these comforting shores, as an academic disciplinarian, I'll soon feel rather empty. Much like cliques in high school, our separation from all those other folks out there is what keeps life bearable and inwardly affirming—yet ultimately stale. In collaborative work and the stories we tell about it, we have insular community groups, particularist campus initiatives, self-validating funders, pigeonholed social services, and typecast communities. But groups in themselves aren't to be disparaged. These small groups are home. They're family, they're comforting and inspiring in their own ways. They're essential though they aren't really the thrills of living. We

have to acknowledge a dual nature of our comforting spaces, our comforting groups, our comforting stories. The Us that's built within these stories can be more rigid than necessary—the produced comfort so great that the space is immune to surprise. The stories we share in these cliques become so commonplace they might, in time, drone you to sleep.

Engagement, for me, at it's most basic, is an attempt to faithfully step out of that lulling comfort in search of your fuller self. Defy the structure of engagement I laid out in Chapter Two. Deny the well-trod storyline where you must enlist some Other and through various schemes try to bring the world from Point A to Point B. The larger story, for me the more interesting and surprising story, starts in a more humble and honest place. There we aren't the heroes of our own story wherein our interventions benevolently solve the world's problems. We're just travelers that yearn for more belonging. That's where a good engagement story starts—with a longing for a more passionate life. There "WE begin our dance of cleaving to, yet holding from, those like us." That's the interesting story of how, together with a larger WE, you begin to find some of that passion again—"the pull to be with this new discovered pleasure." After that simple start, all bets are off.

The most practical advice I can offer in this work of humbly engaging one another is to never approach an Other as an It. Know that the task of approaching an Other as a Thou can be terribly hard to do—most especially if your brand of "engagement," your comforting home, is accustomed to, or requires, a certain detached objectivity, or pastoral benevolence toward your neighbor. The sciences, social and otherwise, along with the human services they inform are bound by a logic that often denies Thou a place. Engagement, for me, requires that space for Thou and I to be made more real and if need be, defended against those who would try to make an engagement story out to be a simplified caricature. The scholarship of engagement, if it intends to take the challenges of this paper seriously, would do well to take this space for Thou and I as its field of study and action. I've continued to write about this scholarship in the second half of Chapter Six.

A second suggestion for action: in approaching others with an almost selfish desire to learn more about yourself you'll probably find someone quite generous, divergent, and blunt that can keep you honest and can push you further than you'd probably like. Treasure these challenging friends and know you can never repay their hospitality. I remember on regular occasion thinking that this work would be whole lot easier if Jemila would just be more agreeable to this or that. Easier? Yes. Better? Probably not. Missing the point? Most definitely. Engagement is a certain scholarship of commitment in my view—commitment not to just ideas but to and between individuals foremost. Engagement is a lasting covenant between closer, more consummate friends. Find friends that engage you, that challenge you, that keep your feet on the ground. As Akua says, collect these friends and learn to weave a contrast into you life.

Lastly, and I give this advice to my students, guard you heart from the easy-to-affirm fear of everything going wrong. Your only recourse amid this fear is to either fix everything, ignore everything, or critique everything. Fixing everything, including yourself, can quickly turn you into an inescapable technocrat. Ignoring everything you can be, at best, the hermit of the post-industrial age. Critiquing everything that's wrong with the world and yourself will quickly turn you into a self-defeating and self-affirming cynic. Technocratic fascism, hermetic escapism, or critical defeatism has become the fearful "rationality" that separates far too many talented individuals from the joys of their practice. Instead, find a small group of people that can build in you a much larger We, defend the space to meet one another, unsettle one another, and mend one another. Tell that story and a thousand more like it. I haven't met anyone who has regretted shedding just a modicum of fear for some good old-fashioned faith in one another. You'll be called romantic and naïve. That's okay. After the parallel text below, in Chapter Six I'll point to a story that let's us reconsider that dismissal of faith and how, through a new engagement, we might make our lives "more fulfilling, satisfying, and...worth the living."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TELLING DIFFERENT STORIES

*I had learned a few lessons working with Jemila and the Food Dignity project for over two years when I developed a class in conversation with Jemila and Scott Peters. The impetus for this course was that Cornell University was charged, through the Food Dignity grant, with developing an undergraduate minor in sustainable food systems. If you've ever visited the Ithaca region you'll know that it's a very "foodie" scene, though as Jemila and many of us involved in the grant now recognize, it is still a place of stark inequities in the food system along lines of race, class, gender, labor and power in general. What was rather clear for Scott and I, was that we academics knew relatively little about the local food system—its triumphs and its downfalls, and most importantly we knew little about the people in it.*

*With this in mind Scott had envisioned teaching a course geared toward collecting stories of the local foodshed. He was turned on to the idea*

I begin the story about the class by listing the relationships that made it possible; the relationships I share with Scott, Jemila, Damon, Michael, and even Laird Christensen though I've never met him. I also point to some relational difficulties, particularly around funding that led me to seek alternative support. These contextual relationships along with the ideals advocated above set the objectives for the class. In this way I'm highlighting the relational nature of curriculum development. This course's objectives weren't decided in a displaced environment where experts arrive at some "common core" standards to be met. These objectives were negotiated with particular relationships in mind *and* practice.

However I noted, the objectives we had, which broadly involved learning from and with the local community weren't a very

*through a similar course about a watershed taught by Laird Christensen at Alma College. This course had involved students in "Writing the Watershed" so to speak. In reference to our own objectives we began to ask how students could help us learn more about the local foodshed. Scott, a perennial lover of stories, recommended we use a more narrative lens. Through work over a summer with Jemila, her assistant Damon Brangman and consultations with Scott, I developed a course called "Storying the Foodshed."*

*The course was positioned as a way for us academics and students alike to learn about the local food system, and through our story-based work we hoped to spark some public conversation around certain issues by making stories available on the web. From Jemila's standpoint the course could help spread some of the good work that is going on as well as bring certain issues to light in the public conversation about food in Tompkins County. That was the basic idea of the course and I ran with it.*

*I thought I'd try to support myself for this course through a funding stream other than Food Dignity. Funding has always been a pressing issue, and I, as a graduate student was particularly*

good fit for "disciplinary" modes of thinking in general and academic writing in particular. I saw academic writing as predominantly about "claim-making" and "defending" one's position with academic expertise and academic evidence. This mode of writing seems like intervention from on high—a rather hierarchical affair that didn't fit my self-concept or my perception of what would be relationally "good" work in this context of engagement.

Looking at the practice of teaching academic writing one can notice traces of how we train young scholars in the modes of top-down thinking and action. For me these traces can be found in what Deborah Tannen(1998, 2000) calls the "argument culture" of academia. Tannen states "the way we train our students, conduct our classes and our research, and exchange ideas at meetings and in print are all driven by our ideological assumption that intellectual inquiry is a metaphorical battle. Following from that is a second assumption, that the best way to demonstrate intellectual prowess is to criticize, find fault, and attack"(Tannen, 2000, p. B7).

*expensive relative to community partners' budgets. So I sought funding through an external source and was happy to find support at Cornell's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. That's how this course became explicitly a "writing course." And that changes the story a great deal because now we not only had the challenge of learning about the food system, but also the challenge of negotiating how that task might fit in to a "discipline" so to say and how academic writing should be thought of in that context.*

*To make matters more difficult, I'd never taught a writing class before. Luckily, the Knight Institute had a summer course to train new recruits like me. The course lasted for two months of Wednesdays and I learned a great deal about reviewing student work and holding writing workshops. I also learned that the normal way we think of academic writing was a poor fit for the task this particular course had in mind.*

*It became increasingly apparent that academic writing was about claim making and the ability to defend one's position from all comers with peer-reviewed evidence. This idea of academic writing didn't fit with a course designed explicitly to learn from and with the local community, which*

Noting that such agonism (Ong, 2012, p. 43) would be detrimental to our project of working and thinking with community members, I knew that I must instead prepare students with a sense of cultural humility that could diffuse the academic sense of knowing and claiming in a community not their own. I didn't want students to remake my own mistake. To some extent I was operating out of fear or appreciatively what we might call an informed worry.

In this state of informed worry I planned as best I could. I thought long and hard about what this "discipline" of public scholarship was and how we might think of writing in that genre. I thought about the identities of students that might come into a class like this and how I might set them up to succeed in relationships in the local community. All of this cerebral work was brought back down to earth when students showed up on the first day of class.

For all the discourse around the importance of students learning to write in the disciplines, students by and large chose this writing course because it fit their schedule—

*in my view is what this engagement stuff is all about.*

*Couldn't we be doing something other than claim making in this work? Can't we explore, openly question, celebrate, mourn, or simply acknowledge through our writing? Or is that not academic enough? Don't we have to reconsider our audience and what constitutes trustworthy evidence in that conversation? These were some of the questions pouring over my mind that summer before the course began. Some of these questions I tried to answer before the course started but to be honest many of them I knew could only be addressed as we approached them together in the course and in the particular contexts of students' work.*

*I did my best to prepare for this course. I talked with community folks throughout the summer gauging their interest and whether the course could call on their expertise and precious time. I sketched up the first five weeks of coursework where I tried to impress upon students the cultural humility I saw necessary to do this writing work with the community. And of course I worried. What if all of this just comes tumbling down? What if I'm just setting students up to fall*

indeed students seemed to pick a writing course far different than their discipline.

Speaking with graduate student friends teaching other seminars, it seems their students wanted a welcome respite from their engineering program, or pre-medical studies and were taking courses about such things as mystery novels of the early 20th century, or children's literature in post-fascist Italy—decidedly not in their discipline. My own class seemingly echoing this trend, I shifted my focus from grand planning to building on students' own interests and excitement.

However, I also wanted to root students interests in a concern for ethics and what is useful—in some sense I wanted to guide students' thinking into a relational path. I wanted their work to be ethically practical. In response to that need I leaned on Ben Okri, an author and storyteller who well understands the ethical and political implications of the writing we do, and more generally the stories we tell. In the story at left I bemoaned the student's mimicry of Okri's style, though in hindsight I suppose we all learn to tell stories by listening to, and learning of, stories from



*flat on their face like I did in Jemila's living room some two years prior?*

*Though worrying doesn't stop the flow of time. A month after my writing crash course ended, I sat in the classroom with 17 students, all but one of them fall semester freshmen.*

*In that first class I went over the syllabus and discussed the overall goal of the course in writing public narratives, learning from the local community, and contributing to the ongoing discussion in the food system in some way. I asked students to be honest and each tell me why they signed up for this particular course out of the 150+ they could choose from. One or two said they were interested in food system stuff, about half of them said they were interested in knowing more about the local community and nearly all of them said that a large part of their decision involved the course fitting a time slot in their schedule.*

*Demographically the class was a fairly good mix of males and females though it was largely white Caucasian. Other than that I knew nothing about these students and I wanted to remedy that. By the end of class they all seemed a little excited but still confused as to what this course was really all about. I was much the same. Also by the end of that first*

our forebears. And I'm happy to say that students gleaned a great deal from Okri.

As one student pointed out in the first assignment, Okri states "beware of the storytellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art: they could unwittingly help along the psychic destruction of their people,"(Okri, 1997, p. 109). Much in line with this quote I wanted to establish a note of caution when working in the potentially dangerous art of public storytelling, a message I had not taken to heart some two years prior. As this particular student pointed out, storytellers, and I think especially academic storytellers have a responsibility to be "truthful, but not discouraging...open-minded, but wary of poisoned stories"(ibid).

As another student pointed out Okri states "like all artists [storytellers] should create beauty as best as they can, should serve truth, and remember humility, and when their work is done and finely crafted, arrowed to the deepest points in the reader's heart and mind, they should be silent, leave the stage,

*class they had their first assignment.*

*They were going to read a work by one of my favorite storytellers, Ben Okri. Though they weren't reading a story of his but rather some aphoristic sections from his book A Way of Being Free titled "The Joys of Storytelling." I wanted students to pick an aphorism from this reading and write about why it was important to them and why it was important for our class to take to heart as we go about this storytelling work. I wanted to learn their writing skills and a little bit about who they were as people.*

*When they turned in the papers, it was rather funny, many of the students had tried to mimic Okri's aphoristic style in their own writing and came off a bit disingenuous or at least tactful. These were students quite adept at following their hunches on what an instructor wants. I gave them Okri. I guess they thought I wanted them to write like Okri. Regardless of the obvious need to work on individual writing styles and tone, the students brought up a number of insights into the meanings, values, and ethics of storytelling that we wrote up into some guiding themes for our course.*

*The next week, one of my favorite early parts of the course was asking students to write a*

*and let the imagination of the world give sanctuary" (ibid., pp. 41-42). In commenting on the importance of creating beauty as well as serving truth another student echoed Okri's stance that storytellers have a responsibility to reawaken our collective sense of wonder(Zink, 2013). With guidance such as this we wrote up some principles central to the course.*

Over the next four weeks students were brought to reflect the ethics in writing about, or in reference to, their own story. I was of the mind that if you can't do justice to yourself then you probably can't do justice to a story out there. In retrospect I made this claim for two reasons. First, telling your own story well requires the self-reflexivity needed to build authentic relationships with others and their stories(Ellis & Bochner, 2003; Foust, 2010, p. 22). Secondly, good stories, and good inquiry, arise from a source of self-interest and, in a word, passion. This goes against the grain of normal disinterested scholarship.

I wanted students to have a reflexive sense of themselves and their interests before they set about negotiating these in a more dynamic community process. In this vein I

*small, ungraded three-page personal food story. I asked the students, "How has food affected you or not affected you? What experiences do you most associate with food? Was food a big part of your family life growing up or not? How might your race, socioeconomic class, gender, and relation to labor have an impact on your experience? What questions do you have moving forward?" I introduced them to the idea of a reflective voice and the learning that can come from simply reflecting on your own experience. And I cut them loose.*

*The responses to this assignment were phenomenal. Through these I really learned who was sharing the room with me and I had inklings of how some students might work within the broader discussion I'd been having with community folks. Some students had experience needing food assistance in their childhood, others' families owned a farm, we had food allergies, and political activism, all mixed in with a fair share of explicit or implicit ignorance. It was great.*

*For the next four meetings we delved into critical readings around race, class, labor and gender in the food system. These readings came from popular media, blogs, monographs, and academic journals. Discussion ensued over*

*made use of critical readings in food systems dealing with race, class, gender, and labor. Each student also took a trip with me to local food system sites and we had a few guest lecturers. Throughout this time students were to write about their own (emotional) reactions and any implications for thinking further about their burgeoning interests. Some of these readings or encounters aroused discomfort. However "discomfort can be a very positive emotion to have in community engagement"(Sarkissian & Hurford, 2010, p. 78).*

Especially during these first four weeks of class I made space for feelings. We had bi-weekly personal reflective essays and intimate discussion in the classroom. Parker Palmer(1993) notes that, "properly employed, with an eye to the end of learning, methods such as these increase our ability to expose our own ignorance, to ask hard questions, to challenge the validity of what others are saying and receive similar challenges in a spirit of growth" (p. 87). I'll add that these emotive spaces also arouse students' (perhaps latent) interests and passions. This much was

*everything from GMO debates, to affirmative action, to labor conditions in the farms of Upstate New York. After all of this I had students rewrite their food story, with a particular eye to their reflexive voice—what they could learn about themselves from other's perception of issues in the food system and to an extent what their identity and role might mean in the work of the course.*

*These second personal food stories were more robust and showed some evidence of students coming to self-realizations. Students also became more reflexive in how they spoke of their lives and issues they've faced in the food system. Acknowledging issues of privilege and oppression and how those might relate (or not) to other lived experience in Tompkins County.*

*I remember in the course telling students to only write three pages or to comment with a paragraph on our class discussion board but receiving copious amounts of writing from most of them just trying to do justice to their own story or their own thoughts on a topic. It was a honeymoon phase within the work and it continued through the next two weeks.*

*At the beginning of the next class students worked with Jemila, Damon, Michael Cederstrom*

apparent as students negotiated some of their interests alongside community partners during a workshop at the end of the first four weeks of class.

It was exciting to see students' interests and identities finally coming to the fore with an aura of public sensibility.

The rest of the course went along fairly well from my perspective. Students negotiated their writing assignments with me as they found new interests in and with Tompkins County. We stayed in tune to our ethical commitments and used the classroom as a forum for students to give advice to one another. Students began building relationships with people and with the space that is Tompkins County. For me, that was the most rewarding sight.

However, I wrote the narrative at the left over a year ago. Looking back, I'm more struck by my inattention to the enclave that was this course. That classroom was a curious and small island amid a university system where students were rewarded for competing in a very different kind of project. While I'm keen to look on this experience fondly, I'm not

*and myself to translate their interests and experiences into ideas for story-based curiosity. One student had celiac disease, and learned to cope with it throughout her entire childhood though her family could afford the special diet. Jemila knew of a low-income family in a similar situation trying to accommodate their child's diet restrictions. But the details of that story, how to meet a restricted diet on a restricted income, weren't largely discussed in the local food system. Jemila, this student, and I could see how that story ought to be told. Another student grew up on a farm nearby but had never fully explored the local farm-to-restaurant pipeline Ithaca has built up. Damon knew of a number of farmers that Michael and he had interviewed and Jemila knew of some organizations through Cornell Cooperative Extension and Direct Access that supported this network. Once again the details and people involved were a bit fuzzy so the student could go get those stories.*

*The process wasn't always that easy or clear-cut as numerous students could attest—in practice it never was easy. But in the long run every student had some story they were going to try and learn from, some story they were going to write and spread even if only to the class. These*

sure I did my job. These courses are intended to teach students how to write in a disciplinary way and I was advocating that they throw many of those tactics away—or at the very least reconsider these tactics as something other than the paragon of good public writing. In advocating for public writing I may have been actively shortchanging students around skills necessary to succeed in traditional academic writing.

Sensing this failed responsibility, over the past year I've been reading a number of books and edited volumes that discuss public writing, or engaged writing coming from composition studies (Adler-Kassner, 2008; Restaino & Cella, 2013; Rose & Weiser, 2010; Weisser, 2002). These books oftentimes emerge in discussing the role of administering college-level writing programs.

Yet, they can have rather different takes on what public writing means. For some public writing is a form of activism, taking on strategies and tactics of interest-based, values-based, or issue-based organizing to make claims for or against specific conditions in

*were stories that each student was, in my words, trying to do justice to. Can you do justice to the local story of gender equality on alternative farms? Can you do justice to the story of that new community-owned grocery store? Can you do justice to the story of Haudenosaunee agriculture and the facts of dispossession?*

*When I say “do justice” I’m not referring to social justice directly but I’m using it in the same way you might say to a friend “Oh that picture does you justice.” In some sense it’s an effort to build a trustworthy telling of somebody or something. In particular I was wanting students to work at crafting stories that were faithful to people’s experience, to what they as students see of the situation, and more generally, though not more importantly, what other folks in this broad food discussion see as going on. Does this story try to be trustworthy to the reality of those in the story?*

*And what can we learn from these truths?*

*Within five weeks of the course starting, each student in this way had negotiated one story-based inquiry. I, on the other hand, now had to think about all seventeen and how I’d be of use to the students and community folks as they built their writing. The honeymoon was over.*

public life(Adler-Kassner, 2008, pp. 128–163; Shamoon & Medeiros, 2010). For others, public writing is a means to convey a given academic idea to the general public(Hartings & Fahy, 2011). Now having completed the narrative topography in Chapter Two, I can see how engaged writing could fall under a number of engagement stories using quite different means to achieve quite different ends.

One thing I found striking in the both the critical activist and public intellectual stance toward public writing was their focus on addressing generalized and often distant others. Yet this is rather contradictory for my class—the idea of writing to vague publics is the goal *and* the problem? This contradiction was not lost on Susan Wells (1996) who after the class was over helped me explain it further.

She states “I have never known a writer, student, or teacher, who wanted a smaller audience, or a narrower readership; I have [also] never known a writer who felt unproblematically at home in the discursive forms of broad political or social address”(pp. 332-333). In this quote she states a paradox of

*The Institutional Review Board didn't consider this student work to be research—it was under the umbrella of journalism and oral history. Nevertheless, I still knew these students' projects had a lot to do with ethics. These were people's lives, passions, and reputations after all. In addition to our work around cultural humility, I led students through a process of Structured Ethical Reflection in the first half of the course. I learned that process from Mary Brydon-Miller. It's a way we can take personal ideas of what's good and relate those to questions we can ask ourselves throughout a dynamic research process—she calls it a practice of covenantal ethics.*

*My job was to keep students accountable to their questions and the ethical considerations of their work. These were relational ethics between myself and students, and folks they'd be talking with. Procedurally, we agreed to always check quotes with folks and never publish anything without express permission. But ethics is more than liability control and I wanted to make that clear to both students and community folks who were giving their time and expertise to the effort. Yes, we needed to do right by the stories themselves, but we also needed to do right by*

public writing. Audiences are ideally and unquestionably large—the might of the pen is judged in the ability to move larger and larger crowds of undifferentiated public mass. Yet still good writers should always feel this form of address is problematic. Public writing according to Wells must find ways to approach this dilemma in practice. Without such guidance, “public discourse presents students with problems of abstraction: they must explain everything, assume an audience that knows nothing. Unlike the densely articulated lore that guides students through [traditional] critical essays, research papers, and other academic genres, text-book advice on public writing is thin and soupy, as if the role were so improbable that no guidance could normalize it”(ibid. p. 334).

I was in this soupiness in navigating the paradox that was my writing class. I wasn't always adept at guiding students about how they might write with a public sensibility. Yet I think I got lucky. My experience in Food Dignity work, and knowing Jemila and Tompkins County to a degree, meant I could highlight the importance of small tasks and

people.

*With those ethics in play, students ventured out. Once again I worried.*

*Students ventured off to gather stories and collect people who could help guide them along their way. We worked as a class and as individuals to be grateful for what we were learning from people all around us. We put that learning to paper.*

*After 15 weeks in the course and a negotiated sequence of assignments, students had written their final pieces and, for the most part, they were stellar. No small measure of their success was a result of the copious hours students spent speaking with over 50 local community members. These included a short order cook in our university's dining system that had been working there for 50 years. There were some local administrators in Health and Human Services, a bevy of local farmers, a single mother advocating for children with diet-related illnesses, and a number of restaurateurs just to name some examples.*

*Needless to say I was really pleased with what we produced. Students learned about the food system, they learned about (and with) the local*

*temper my expectations as students explored who they were in relation to a given subject, in a particular public, and for most, in relation to a new home. We could hold space, and hold time for that care and work. I was lucky to be in this group of mostly first-semester college students who were eager for this task of self-work, and recognized the importance of it—even if the goal of hospitably sharing stories was less heroic than lone problem solving or truth claiming through the written word.*

Our task in this small enclave was rather different than the story held at the center of university life. In my short career instructing courses at Cornell I've been struck by how eager students are to grow into the voice of what they suppose is academic adulthood. They're quick to adopt and mirror the critical, cynical, and fearful minds of their tutors. They're institutionally rewarded for donning this academic identity of claim-maker and problem-solver and rarely brought to question it through exposure to different experiences and different stories.

The classroom story at the left is humble, perhaps foolish, but still good. In it I



*community, and they learned how to write. On this last point of course we learned a bit about the mechanics of writing, from paragraph structure, and how to use evidence, to sentence level editing, citation management, and punctuation skills. More importantly for me, we explored ways of writing what mattered to each student and others they'd come to know better.*

*When students approached me looking for advice on how to write a particular piece we'd have a conversation about what they thought this story could accomplish, what they wanted, or community folks wanted to accomplish through this story. Sometimes this was the good old academic tried and true claim-making that could be supported by academic evidence. More often community members and students alike wanted to accomplish more nuanced goals like calling attention to something that had been neglected (such as food assistance with diet-related illnesses), pointing to something worth investing in (such as a locally owned grocery store), or celebrating something worth expanding (the local farm-to-restaurant relationships).*

*These weren't necessarily the problem-driven, expertise-laden battles over data and the*

*grew to know myself a bit more, as did students who learned to practice exploring their curiosity with others. Their stories, and final assignments have been sitting in my computer until this past week when I began asking some new colleagues if they'd like to use them, or the online forum, to further their own work. In one possibility the stories and forum might live on and contribute to a gardening program at the local high school. It's affirming to know that the hospitable place students, Jemila, all the others and I, nurtured—produced a small gift that's worth sharing.*

I've just recently come to acknowledge the paradox that's rightly at the center of much scholarship on public writing. There's a central challenge to negotiating one's voice and identity in a broader world you often don't know as well as you might. Most scholarship on public writing implicitly or explicitly asserts that in spite of the paradox the discipline of public writing must carry on anyway. The ultimate task of wielding the mighty pen is still the ultimate task for these writers. We must, according to these scholars

*correct answer that are the norm in academe. These were community stories with accompanying aspirations, rationales, and means for accomplishing their goals. Of course there were some stories that were duds—for this or that reason they just didn't grab interest. But overall, in 15 weeks these students produced something worthwhile, and after that, the semester was over, and they left.*

approach this paradox with some sort of self-sacrificial heroics.

Yet, in difference to much of what's written about public writing I'd like to advocate for approaching this paradox through another kind of work and ethic. This work and ethic shouldn't displace previous claims of what public scholarship can do, but compliment those. It's my claim, at the end of this long inquiry that we can also come to nurture public work by believing in a different story. It's decidedly not the story of a suffering hero.

## CHAPTER SIX

### OF EPIMETHEUS IN DAILY LIFE

*Inspired by Ivan Illich*

Over the course of this dissertation I've been circling around this idea of engagement—slowly revealing more stories that help me to think about that idea as I try to practice it. In this last chapter, I'll make my most pointed statement about a myth that I believe is central to most engagement stories. It's the myth of Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus. Through this chapter I'll attempt to show you how Prometheus in particular has come to epitomize the character, the identity, of the responsible professional in Western society. Thereby his myth largely informs the way many institutions consider engagement. I'll begin this paper by recounting the well-rehearsed and widely believed myth wherein Prometheus is considered the benevolent protagonist that saves humankind. Then I'll trace the history of this particular myth through some key moments of Western civilization. Later, in the second half of this chapter I'll juxtapose this myth with a complimentary story that highlights a long-forgotten lesson we might learn from Prometheus' brother Epimetheus. For both brothers I relay how their identities have and might guide our stories of engagement. In my view Prometheus is the benevolent hero of Western civilization and he infuses our now flattened stories of engagement. In response I firmly believe that Epimetheus is the patron saint of a different kind of engagement. Reconsidering his forgotten story is a necessary task if we're going to push beyond the limits of our public work in the current era.

These two stories I'm about to tell bear greatly on our identities in engaged work. They also foreground an element of choice we have in approaching the world around us. I've largely borrowed the first story, wherein Prometheus is the heroic protagonist, from Plato's description

of a dialogue between Socrates and Protagoras. The second story I'll share later precedes any written text so I will attempt to speak it on paper while pulling from some scattered sources. After each telling, I'll bring history and cultural theory to bear on each of them, one by one. The moral of the first story reinforces the claims of modernity and Western civilization. The moral of the second story is the moral of this dissertation.

### **The old story**

*Before the beginning the world was of chaos. There could exist no mortal creatures only gods and the elements they divined. Yet a time came when mortal beings should arrive and the gods fashioned them of earth and fire in the depths of the world. These beings were without form. Before these beings were to enter the world the gods ordered Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus to equip these beings with their various talents and qualities so that all might live fully in divine creation. Epimetheus, whose name means hindsight, proposed that he do the equipping. His brother, Prometheus, whose name means foresight, would inspect his work before sending each creature to the world they would inhabit.*

*To some Epimetheus gave brawn without swiftness of feet, while he equipped the weaker with speed; some he gave claws or teeth, while others he left unarmed; for the latter he devised some other means of defense, giving some great size for protection, while others were small enough to hide unnoticed, or escape by burrowing under the ground or flying through the air. He built in each creature the equipment to survive and defy extinction.*

*After ensuring that no race would be destroyed by another he protected each against the elements. Giving some bountiful fur or tough hide. He ensured that all creatures wore a bed on which to lie. He armored their feet with hooves and callous skin. Next he provided for their food, giving some the roots of trees and to others fruits. To some he gave insects*

*and to others still he gave different animals. Some he destined to have few offspring and others reproduced quite prolifically and thus their race was preserved.*

*Yet Epimetheus was not very wise. In his giving he distributed all the qualities which he could give and left none for man. Epimetheus on seeing the naked and unshod creature before him was terribly perplexed. Prometheus at this time came to see how his brother was getting on, and saw man with no means of defending himself against all the brute creatures his brother had created. And, the appointed hour for man to enter the world was approaching.*

*Prometheus feared the worst and so stole fire and the mechanical arts from Athene and Hephaistos—giving them to man and thus ensuring man's survival.*

*War broke out and Prometheus sided with the Olympians but continued tricking Zeus to ensure man's necessity of fire. At this, Zeus was furious. So, he made a mortal of profound beauty. Hermes gave this mortal a lying tongue and a deceptive heart—this was the first mortal woman Pandora. To her, Zeus gave a jar, an amphora, which she was forbidden to open. Zeus then sent her to live among humans where Epimetheus had made his home.*

*Prometheus warned his brother to not be fooled by gifts from Zeus, but Pandora's beauty was too great and Epimetheus allowed her to stay among them. He married her. Over time, Pandora could no longer resist opening her amphora. In her curiosity she opened the jar and unleashed all manner of evil upon the world. Only one good thing, hope, remained shut in the jar. Zeus' revenge was now apparent.*

*Prometheus had failed. His words were unheeded and his efforts, save for his thievery, were for naught. Zeus had him chained to a rock where night and day he was tormented by a great eagle gnashing at his liver. To this day, humanity survives in spite of the*

*foolish Epimetheus and curious Pandora. We survive the world by our use of wits—the mechanical arts and the fire, which Prometheus in his foresight secured for us.*

The short myth you read above resembles that of classic antiquity in the writings of Hesiod and Plato, circa 650 and 360 BCE respectively. However, the lesson it teaches is not always apparent. I'll bring our focus to the moment Prometheus, whose name means foresight, comes back to check the work of his brother. He witnesses humanity and is immediately struck with a fear of the future. Humanity, in Prometheus' approximation was doomed to die. He anticipates this. He expects this. He fears this. His fear necessitates some intervention. So he steals the practical arts and the fire by which humanity might be saved, and subsequently they might continually save themselves. He provides them with assurance, comfort, in the form of insurance—the tools of individual survival against nature. Epimetheus his brother the fool necessitated this intervention and furthermore exacerbated the situation by letting himself be fooled by the beautiful but essentially evil Pandora. Epimetheus in his distraction and blindness to the future perils fueled the decimation of the human race. In this myth, Prometheus must constantly sacrifice himself and his happiness so that humanity might be secured. He's humanity's benevolent and beleaguered pastor.

By and large this is the myth of Prometheus that you might read in a grade school English class. For instance, in New York State this myth is used in reaching the Common Core standards taught in Grade 6, Module 1, Unit 2 under the title of "The Lightning Thief"(Expeditionary Learning, 2013). This popularized myth of Prometheus, which is likely over three millennia old, I argue is one of the most influential myths impacting the modern idea of public institutions. Furthermore this myth impacts institutional stories of public engagement in particular. For centuries, institutional engagement has taken the form of Promethean intervention. In the following two sections I'll sketch the path of this myth from antiquity into our present day by taking in two stops—one in the Enlightenment, and the next in the Industrial Revolution.

## **The old rulers**

From the days of Hesiod and Plato let's jump forward two millennia. In the history of the West I'm moving past the establishment of the Christian Church, the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire, and the early rustlings of Europe where we could without doubt trace the classic story of Prometheus. I'm moving past these to focus on a small area in France where the modern notion of Science took hold amid the fervor of plague and religious war.

Many classical historians consider the early 17th century to be a time of peaceful leisure that allowed secular intellectuals to refute pre-modern philosophical claims and embrace modern trust in scientific rationalism. In contrast, Stephen Toulmin(1990) reminds us that the early 17th century was a violent and sickly landscape surrounding the Thirty Years' War where religious zealotry and plague ran throughout Europe. It was around this time of violence and flux that the pluralist, beautified, and romantic vision of Renaissance humanism had seemingly met its limits. I'll explain.

As was common in the Renaissance, knowledge and the methods by which you came to it were largely based on a concept of embodied similitude. This way of knowing, by our current academic standards, might be considered overly romantic, frivolous, beautified, and tolerant of ambiguous pluralisms. Yet the tradition was quite popular throughout art and philosophy—we could look to Shakespeare and Montaigne for examples. In their humanist tradition of the Renaissance you could understand the world by interpreting through the various senses the analogous and sympathetic relationships between objects either in form or function – it was a way of thinking relationally though perhaps not “rationally.” For instance Montaigne recommending, shortly after a brush with death, that it's better “to slide over this world a bit lightly and on the surface” this was the way to shed his fears, sensing life as it passed through his body(Bakewell, 2010, p. 22). This way of being and thinking in body and mind contained two consequences. First, “science” and what we now think of as non-science—literature, poetry, superstition, magic, etc.—were not necessarily distinguished from one another. Second, this engagement of the world through the senses encouraged a reading of the world with the intent

of arriving at an *interpretation of meaning* which wasn't necessarily static—a type of hermeneutic knowledge (Foucault, 1970; Jackson, 1989).

Amid the evils that this ambiguity and tolerance, this way of knowing, ignored or in fact produced in the mid 17th century, a new paradigm came forth. Renaissance humanism was ill equipped to speak in a world of war and bloodshed—it could not adequately explain it or do away with it. There was rampant evidence that society wasn't going the “right” way. The Protestant and Catholic Churches were in all out war. Feudalism was being challenged as the plague gave little care of title. The foundations of Renaissance Humanism—similitude and tolerance—were being questioned. As Bakewell (2010) notes, “sixteenth century warfare was a messy business, a matter less of battlefield glamour than of hypothermia, fever, hunger, disease, and infected sword and gunshot wounds for which there was little effective treatment”(p. 46). It was apparent that the practices of the past were not working for the “new” Europe and many leaders began to question with what type of knowledge they might secure their individual and collective survival amid others and their brutish nature. At this time institutions of the state in particular began to find security, not within humanist tolerance and not within the warring churches, but within a particular brand of science I'll call Enlightenment Rationalism—it was a knowledge one could trust as being unbiased and rational in an irrational world. Enlightenment rationalism was the Promethean fire that might save mankind from the chaos and destruction surrounding them. It presented a practical art necessary to survival.

Perhaps the most prominent origin of this story lies in the scientific philosophy of René Descartes. This gentleman is the point around which many academic debates pivot—for some he ruined everything—for others he revolutionized the world. It's curious to an observer of history why his particular philosophy of science was met with such zeal by intellectuals and power holders in the mid 17th century(for a lengthy discussion precisely on this see Toulmin, 1990). His victory or mistake as you wish to name it was brought about by a simple fear—a very elemental fear—a fear that resonated with the literati and the plutocracy in the context following the Thirty Years War. To begin, his fear, which took the form of a doubt, was that



nothing actually existed as he perceived it. He came to not trust himself, particularly his body, his perceptions, his senses, and emotions. Informed by this fear he attempted to shed the Epimethean foolishness of the body in search of certainty, which alone might offer some security. In so shedding the body, he revolutionized the Promethean art of Science.

One of my favorite stories Descartes tells is about wax.

*Take for example, this piece of wax; it has been but recently taken from a hive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained; it still retains something of the odor of the flowers from which it has been gathered; its color, its shape, its size, are manifest to us; it's hard, cold, easily handled, and when struck upon with the finger emits a sound. In short, all that is required to make a body known with the greatest possible distinctness is present in the one now before us. But behold! While I am speaking let it be moved toward the fire. What remains of the taste exhales, the odor evaporates, the color changes, the shape is destroyed, its size increases, it becomes liquid, it becomes hot and can no longer be handled, and when struck emits no sound. Does the wax, notwithstanding these changes, still remain the same wax? We must admit that it does; no one doubts that it does, no one judges otherwise. What, then, was it I comprehended so distinctly in knowing the piece of wax? Certainly it could be nothing at all that I was aware of by way of the senses, since all things that came by the way of taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing, are changed, and the wax none the less remains (Descartes, 1960, p. 37).*

Our senses in this passage, our perceptions, according to Descartes, the father of modern science, often lie to us about the elemental nature of things. Much like Epimetheus, our senses fool us into thinking that Pandora is as we sense her. The true nature of Pandora, her essence, is known to Prometheus and his keen vision which might be considered equivalent to Descartes modern conception of Science. As Epimetheus fell victim to his body, we must know that the organs we have for sensing, trick us into thinking the world is as we perceive it—in the now or through the history of the ancients. For Descartes, we must do away with this foolishness.

Descartes asks, what *is* wax if when melted it defies all of our previous senses of it? What is the *essence* of wax that makes it what it is regardless of our perception? What is this *object* wax? In answering these questions, Descartes claims we find the essential truth. While wax might be home for bees, and light your home in the night, while it may be a source of joy, and simple necessity the essential truth—the truth we must know—is that (bees)wax is  $C_{15}H_{31}COOC_{30}H_{61}$ . Anything beyond this is merely an earthly manifestation.

In relation to this turn in philosophy, Ludwig von Wittgenstein used to recount a story of sitting beside a philosopher who was staring at a tree, repeating to himself, “I know that that’s a tree.” Another walked by looking perplexed, and Wittgenstein reassured him not to worry, “we are only doing philosophy(Wittgenstein, 1972, p. 467).” Descartes’ question, and in turn the question of much of philosophy since his time, was a question of how we come to understand “that that’s a tree” or “that that’s wax.” In difference to Renaissance Humanism exemplified in Montaigne’s search for similitude and commonality, Descartes’ doubt required a point of absolute certainty(Bakewell, 2010, p. 138). How do we perform such a task through the logic and rationality of the human mind—taking the maxim “I think therefore I am” as the only given? For Descartes one thing was for sure—in order to understand this singular identity of objects we had to get our bodies—along with the assumptions, perceptions, and biases they harbor—out of the equation. But if our bodies cannot be trusted what can? This is the challenge, the doubt, the fear, of Descartes’ *Meditations*.

As we separate the mind from the body, from its tricky senses, what then do we bring to the mind to understand the world and its inherent Reason? Descartes’ answer, along with many of his peers like Galileo, was that we must turn to rationality and the sciences that bring this disembodied concept into them. *Mathesis universalis*—the abstract mathematization of the world would replace the human body and its flaws(Jackson, 1989, p. 175). These sciences could be used to predict the various behaviors of objects in laboratory settings and with repeated testing such knowledge could be used to not only understand but also predict and control objects in the physical world. Thus the Enlightenment Age accelerated a re-cataloguing of the cosmos where

the mind could base knowledge on objective measurement. This method-driven knowing proved to be very powerful both inside and outside the standard laboratory.

In a useful metaphor we can consider the sciences as having created “rulers”—multitudes of rulers for measuring the true identity of objects and their difference from others. Many of the rulers were used to judge the *quantity* of things – the number of atoms in a kilogram of lead for instance. But rulers also began to measure the *quality* of a given object—take standards that determine the purity of metallic substances. Though even more complex rulers were developed in cases of economy, which I’ll cover later.

Once modern scientists measured and “knew” these singular identities, or properties of a given object, by objectively gazing upon their particular behavior they could determine how they might behave through future time and space. Such knowledge led to the assumed ability and real probability to not only *predict* but in some facet *control* vast networks of quantities, reductive qualities and abstracted values of given objects through space and time. There was a profound leap in this particular kind of knowledge starting in the early 17th century—and with time, its particular brand of utility—the ability to highlight a purer essence of things, and subsequently predict and control them—became preferred to other ways of being in and knowing the world(Toulmin, 1990, pp. 109–117).

This preference, as I’ll explain below, annealed the European sense of exceptionalism in their expanding world. From the ashes of the Thirty Years War there arose another Promethean myth alongside the rationality of science. This second myth was the concept of a modern Europe. Hand in hand with modern science, this geographic solidarity gave rise to the construct of Occidentalism. As Gurinder Bhambra (2007) points out, the increased utilization of the printing press, the established connectivity of European intellectuals throughout the Renaissance, and the solidification of Latin as the linguistic “repository and instrument of dominant culture”(p. 100) reinforced the *myth of European cultural integrity*(pp. 83-105). This myth of coherent Occidentalism was defined in opposition to the Orient, with Islam in particular coming to reinforce difference as the other(Amin, 2009; Bhambra, 2007; Said, 2003).

What may have begun as a slight fascination with the cultural other, solidified overtime, into a so-called Western philosophy with which certain selves could strive to identify. According to Amin (2009) this construct “filled an essential ideological function in the formation of the honest, upright, bourgeois citizen, freed from the religious prejudice of the Middle Ages” (p. 167). With this attempt to define modern Europe in difference to its past, and in difference to the Orient the idea of intellectualism took a very sharp turn, away from God, perceptions, similitude, and feelings and toward “rational” scientific modern man. Trained at Cambridge or the Sorbonne, certified by papal bull, royal decree or otherwise, the Enlightenment intellectual represented the face of the new Europe amid the clamor of the larger world.

Within the ramblings of the Cartesian *cogito*, authority became associated with the rational and scientific, in a word, intellectual “I.” This self-conception was defined in opposition to the Oriental other—the irrational, bodily, and sensual “It” which, Descartes’ science insisted, could not be trusted. Here again we can see the undertones of the Promethean myth, Pandora being the earthly delights harboring evil and the Epimethean fool who succumbs to feeling. The rational European would not succumb to this fate that had befallen the savages of the world. Thus, science spread from the laboratory to the world at large, which included humans (Foucault, 1970; Jackson, 1989; Toulmin, 1990). Intellectuals of the time started to catalog the realm of human interaction by attending to the human as object through objective measure. They assumed a “ruler” in the Western intellectual construct of the rational and scientific “I”. Approaching the human sphere with a curiosity about what made It tick, how might I predict It, and control It, and evaluate It, so I can manipulate It and improve It became a standard “intellectual” exercise.

To provide an example of this type of thinking we can look to the historical record. To highlight the way science and the way we think of rulers for judging the quality of a given *people* note below these two quite different pieces of writing about Oriental culture. The first,

which is *not* based in Enlightenment Rationalism, is from Montaigne *On Cannibals* written in the 1570s.

*I do not believe, from what I have been told about this people, that there is anything barbarous or savage about them, except that we all call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits. Indeed we seem to have no other criterion of truth and reason than the type and kind of opinions current in the land where we live...We are justified...in calling these people barbarians by reference to the laws of reason, but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity (quoted in Jackson, 1989, p. 175).*

Notice that the above statement from Montaigne places reason in one compartmental logic but separates reason from the realm of comparison—or similitude. As I've said previously, for intellectuals in the humanist tradition of the Renaissance, knowledge and the methods by which you came to it were largely based on this concept of embodied similitude.

Now note the piece below from John Locke's *Essays on the Law of Nature* written in the 1660s – ninety years after Montaigne's essay.

*Anyone who consults the histories both of the old world and the new world, or the itineraries of travelers, will easily observe how far apart from virtue the morals of these people are, what strangers they are to humane feelings, since nowhere is there such doubtful honesty, so much treachery, such frightful cruelty, in that they sacrifice to the gods and also their tutelary spirit by killing people and offering kindred blood. And no one will believe that the law of nature is best known and observed among these primitive and untutored tribes, since among most of them there appears not the slightest track of piety, merciful feeling, fidelity, chastity, and the rest of the virtues; but rather they spend their life wretchedly among robberies, thefts, debaucheries, and murders (quoted in Jackson, 1989, p. 176).*

The easiest way to dismiss this historical shift is to discredit Locke as an imperialist and a racist, and dismiss Montaigne as a romantic fool who had too much time on his hands. This dismissal belies the elemental shift in the structure of human thought which Descartes epitomized. “Truth” was in the process of becoming synonymous with the measured rational mind—assumed and erased as that of the European white male “ruler”—and falsehood was becoming associated with the bodily senses and passions—at least the non-virtuous ones being cast upon non-intellectual fools, women, peasants, and savages (Toulmin, 1990, p. 28). Montaigne who wrote in a very personal style, placed his ruler, himself and his society, on the table to glide over a type of embodied comparison. Locke, make no mistake, used a ruler—that of his thought-homogenous identity as a white European—but he erased it from the record. His identity as a rational man, for him had no bearing on his ability to reason. This new unquestionable ruler of European exceptionalism, which was erased, placed imperial conquest on a new footing. This shift implied modernity was one particular and rational road to progress along. In Promethean fashion, certainty around what should be done to secure the future survival of the race, had its clearest vision to date in the form of Enlightenment Rationalism and European Exceptionalism.

Now, I do not want to imply that women, the indigenous, or the poor had not suffered under the church; or that oppression began at the dawn of the modern episteme. What I’d like to point out is that the form of that oppression, its continuation and its specific brand of dogmatism, came to have a new form of justification—secular, unbiased, disembodied, and rational. Indeed this new dogmatism reinforced the justification of oppression by disguising it under the banner of its opposite: salvation. Science alongside, or instead of, religion could be used to deliver salvation to others from on high in a Promethean myth of self-sacrifice. This myth of Promethean intellectualism embedded itself throughout the colonialism and imperialism of the past centuries that occurred under the idea of the state. The notion of the intellectual self who through science can save humanity was the sacred fire in this new gospel of secular salvation—the bedrock of Promethean engagement. The state became the guarantor

of this new age—the benevolent pastor of the human flock. Thus, as I will offer below, Prometheus is the palimpsest on which a construct of the modern nation state has been written.

### **The old management**

From the days of Descartes and Locke let us move forward two centuries when the idea of the modern nation state solidified its role in the support of industrial enterprise. We are moving past the Peace of Westphalia, and much of the Scientific Revolution—the French and American Revolutions are coming to a close. The imperial conquest of the Americas has reached full swing and the imperial conquest of Africa has yet to begin. It's around this time that the notion of Enlightenment Rationalism, secured in the state, is put at the service of industry.

I'll begin this section with a story recounted by William James in 1897, roughly during the middle of the era I'll be focusing on from 1760 to the present. This story foregrounds the technical implements of science for measurement and control in the establishment of modern statecraft—a fulfillment of the Enlightenment dream. James mentions “the aspiration to be “scientific” is such an idol of the tribe to the present generation”(W. James, 1953/1897, p. 212). He goes on to say his current peers “find it hard to conceive of a creature who should not feel [the pull of] it, and harder still to treat it freely as the altogether peculiar and one-sided subjective interest that it is” (ibid). To highlight this idolatry of science James uses the story of an English traveler who asked a Turkish *cadi*, an Oriental, for statistical information regarding the territory. The letter sent by the *cadi* was originally published in *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* by Austen Henry Layard(1853, p. 663). I agree with James, the “document is too full of edification not to be given in full”(James, 1953/1876, p. 212).

*My Illustrious Friend and Joy of my Liver!*

*The thing you ask of me is both difficult and useless. Although I have passed all my days in this place, I have neither counted the houses nor have I inquired into the number of the inhabitants; and as to what one person loads on his mules and the other stows away in*

*the bottom of his ship, that is no business of mine. But, above all, as to the previous history of this city, God only knows the amount of dirt and confusion that the infidels may have eaten before the coming of the sword of Islam. It were unprofitable for us to inquire into it.*

*Oh my soul! Oh my lamb! Seek not after the things which concern thee not. Thou camest unto us and we welcomed thee: go in peace.*

*Of a truth thou hast spoken many words and there is no harm done for the speaker is one and the listener is another After the fashion of thy people thou hast wandered from one place to another until thou art happy and content in none. We (praise be to God) were born here and never desire to quit it. Is it possible, then, that the idea of a general intercourse between mankind should make any impression on our understandings? God forbid!*

*Listen, oh my son! There is no wisdom equal unto the belief in God! He created the world, and shall we liken ourselves unto him in seeking to penetrate into the mysteries of his creation? Shall we say, behold this star spinneth round that star and this other star with a tail goeth and cometh in so many years! Let it go! He from whose hand it came will guide and direct it.*

*But thou wilt say unto me, Stand aside, oh man, for I am more learned than thou art and have seen more things. If thou thinkest that thou art in this respect better than I am, thou art welcome. I praise God that I seek not that which I require not. Thou art learned in the things I care not for; and as for that which thou hast seen I defile it. Will much knowledge create thee a double belly, or wilt thou seek Paradise with thine eyes?*

*Oh my friend! If thou wilt be happy say, There is no God but God! Do no evil and thus wilt thou fear neither man nor death for surely thine hour will come!*



As you can begin to tell in the passage above, the thought of proper governance as a rational science was zealously brought into the idea of the Western state. This idea of science tied to governing human affairs became the *sine qua non* of a modern nation and modern citizenship. You can sense this more clearly as Imaum Ali Zadi casts this assumed requisite in sharp relief. His voice would be eventually drowned out in the forms of modern leadership by the colonial spread of what Foucault(1991) called governmentality—a particularly modernist answer to how any modern governor should govern.

Foucault wrote about governmentality through the context of France after the French Revolution. He tied it to the culmination of Descartes’ scientific gaze transmogrified into the gaze upon man as an object—as an “empirical entity”(Foucault, 1970, p. 344). To begin this exploration he looked to the re-interpretation of Machiavelli’s *The Prince* by the intelligentsia of the early 19th century. In these reinterpretations of Machiavelli’s classic text, Foucault unearths a conversation where intellectuals were trying to “articulate a kind of rationality which was intrinsic to the art of government”(Foucault, 1991, p. 89). The questions remained twofold: what are the dangers to the art of governing, and what is the art of manipulating forces in society to ensure the continuation of right governance? Yet in asking these questions, interpreters tried to distance themselves from the way a Prince personified power in classic antiquity. Before the French Revolution power was held in the state via visible force, the unquestionable authority of the monarchic state. Subsequent to the French Revolution, the art of governing was to be thought of as a societal charge and must have continuity with the idea of individual citizenship. In such a concept of government, “a person who wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods and his patrimony, after which he will be successful in governing the state”(ibid, p. 91). This is how the continuity of governmentality flows upward in the form of proper citizenship. Yet the continuity of governmentality must also flow down. In this sense, “when a state is run well, the head of the family will know how to look after his

family, his goods, and his patrimony, which means in turn, that individuals will behave as they should”(ibid, p. 92).

The chief operating metaphor in this construction of right governance is economy, and specifically the economy of the family, which is distributed among all actors recognized by the state in the form of patriarchal or as Foucault said, pastoral, power. The form of the new state and new citizen must assume the role of the father figure, ever attentive to the “correct manner of managing individuals, goods, and wealth in the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children, and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper”(ibid). The protection of the state from threats to its survival, the fear associated with future threats, is thus diffused from the Prince into vast networks of pastoral power. Promethean pastoralism, the urge to prevent the maldistribution of goods, was thus spread throughout society rather than housed in any one distinct location or political figurehead.

For Foucault, this form of power, manifested in the modern state as a government of economy, came to have new importance in the reality of 18th century Industrialism. The necessity of governing the surge of European urban populations and the dizzying array of things moving in and out of the state, the surge of mercantilism, necessitated a certain objectified perspective and means of intervention(Foucault, 1991). The small family, it was assumed, could no longer attend to all the things one must account for in the right governance of economy. Thus enter the quite Promethean sciences for managing the right economy of human interaction. Ensnared in the myriad institutions of modern statecraft, these human sciences begin the reconsolidation and disciplinarity of Promethean intervention.

According to Ivan Illich the operating metaphor of this new age of mechanization became the system not the body(Illich & Cayley, 2005). As the human body was medicalized into the respiratory system, the circulatory system, and the nervous system so too the architects of the industrial state envisioned the incorporated systems of society. Society, assumed too complex for any one person to comprehend as Foucault points out, was thus divided into education systems, health systems, welfare systems; production systems and consumption

systems. The Industrial Revolution necessitated complicated means of managing capital and securing labor. There arose systems of education and health care to provide a workforce and to ensure people's ability to remain useful in the production of capital that secured the family prosperity. Institutions to promote and ensure the general welfare, as well as prisons were devised to cater to those who did not yet fit or could not fit into the industrial system.

The necessity of efficiency within these complex economies required a managerial role, which manifested itself in the diffuse governmentality of the Industrial Age. Consequently, over these systems presided benevolent experts that assumed the familial role of the father, whose responsibility it was to ensure the right use of economy for the promotion of the general welfare and the increase of productivity within particular systems that monopolized the provision of necessary services (see the discussion of radical monopolies in Illich, 1973, pp. 65–71). These experts were the “surrogate knowers” (Scheman, 2001, p. 41) of society's complex systems and through the development of their gifts, and the continual reproduction of the expert, humanity's survival could be secured. Thus instrumental rationality solidified its place in the proper management of the Industrial Age, personified in the role of the expert who was trained to understand the systems of society and solve the problems thereof.

As James C. Scott (1998) points out,

*the premodern state was, in many crucial respects, partially blind; it knew precious little about its subjects, their wealth, their landholdings, and yields, their location, their very identity. It lacked anything like a detailed “map” of its terrain and its people. It lacked for the most part, a measure, a metric that would allow it to “translate” what it knew into a common standard necessary for a synoptic view (p. 2).*

With the lack of this generalizable data on society, external interventions, Promethean interventions from centers of power were crude and ineffectual. The challenge was then how any institution presiding over a complex system could “get a handle on its subjects and their environment”(ibid.). Not only did this necessitate a modern state that collected and analyzed

vast amounts data, it required the institutions of society to restructure themselves and their clients into a reality that could be more easily generalizable—a reality that lent itself to surveillance, and discernibility by a pastoral and external decider. For me, this is a type of hyper-Prometheanism that we witness in high modern society. Such a vantage on the world and the identity it reinforces is highly logical and can be deadly serious.

Scott devotes his book to explaining how and why many such highly logical grand schemes to centrally govern and benevolently intervene in human life have gloriously failed. Scott begins his interpretation by pointing out designed and unsustainable managed forests. Rows of trees aligned scientifically for the maximum output of marketable fiber, this engineered system, will overtime kill the forest and defeat any purpose(ibid., pp. 11-52). Likewise, the villagization of a town in Tanzania into a series of normalized grids will effectively kill a neighborhood (ibid., pp. 223-261). While trees cannot think themselves out of this managed system, humans can and do. Humans make a choice, not always deliberately, of how to respond in the face of institutionalized standardization. They internalize it and play the game to the limits of feasibility. Or, sensing the oppression of centralized legibility and external control, humans create infinite ways to circumvent authority and protect their dignity(see J. C. Scott, 1985). They break the rules. To quell this circumvention, the diffuse governmentality of the state finds the necessity of discipline. Thus the art of governing, requires policing of those that are deemed outside the standards(Foucault, 2012/1979).

All of these institutionalized rationalities were designed to promote certain notions of economy—to benefit efficiency. To realize this rationality there are various tools, practical arts that a Promethean might use in the benevolent manipulation of society. Ivan Illich contrasted these tools from convivial tools that I'll discuss later. Manipulative tools were a separate breed. I sense, as the son of a carpenter, the need to explore an assumption that all tools are manipulative. Aren't all tools intended to manipulate their environments? The way Illich described tools, necessitates in his mind a history of tools. The history and development of

manipulative tools in particular bears greatly on the idea of instrumentality both he and Foucault considered as a basis of modern society.

Illich begins his historical treatment of the tool by noting that in many languages of classic antiquity—tools were extensions of the human body. They represented together, as Aristotle spoke, an *organon*, a tool. “They called the hand an *organon*, the hammer an *organon*, and the hammering hand an *organon*”(Illich & Cayley, 2005, p. 265). The idea that tools could possess intent apart from individual human action was absurd. However, over time, especially under Arab influence in the 12th century, certain tools came to incorporate human intentions. The intent of a sword, whether in the hand of a child, a peasant, or a king, was to kill(ibid.). Through the establishment of the medieval church and subsequent development of modern state institutions we see the creation of more complex tools. These tools too, could incorporate human intentions for learning, health, and salvation. During the Enlightenment and the establishment of the modern state, the school, the hospital, and poor houses became tools that could incorporate human intentions.

Later, with the modern inclination of systems theory, most notably since the Industrial Revolution, we see the reinstatement of humanity as correlative to tools—but rather than the *organon*, in which a human uses a tool for independent action, we now have the tool as system into which human intentions should be made to fit(ibid). Rather than a return to the days of Aristotle now we witness in history the idea of a human in service to her tools rather than the other way around. We can see the discrepancy in how someone might view success in the age of instrumentality.

Within a system, if something is achieved it has been achieved by the more rational design of an instrument—by a complex tool. Change occurs through tools used in making more rational methods within, or a strategic interventions into, a system (ibid., p. 226). Now, rather than a tool being used by a creative human to realize their autonomous intentions, appropriate action, often in the form of employment, is constructed as correlative to the maintenance of tools or in modern terminology, systems. Work becomes our service in systems, in tools—these

tools which can then work more efficiently on us. It's believed that these systems can achieve gains far greater than any individual—they are aggregate systems and institutions which together, mechanistically, produce wealth, health, and learning for instance. These massive tools, it is assumed, especially through their mandatory nature, can achieve more efficient production than individual humans with puny tools.

Such tools and how they operate on or for humanity can be recognized in the maintenance of modern systems where governmentality and instrumentality coalesce into a focus on economic efficiency. For Illich, schools, hospitals, and other social service systems exemplified these tools deemed benevolent. Since my experience is closest to the discipline of education, Illich's interpretation of modern schooling and the need to deschool society is particularly poignant (Illich, 1971). But rather than repeat his arguments, I'll just briefly quote some samples of the systematic approach to education, the construct of schooling as a manipulative tool, which he was railing against. Below I've repeated excerpts from a speech called *Education for Efficiency* by Charles W. Eliot (1909), the President of Harvard University from 1869-1909.

*Education for efficiency is my subject. By efficiency I mean effective power for work and service during healthy active life. This effective power every individual man or woman should desire and strive to become possessed of; and to the training and development of this power the education of each and every person should be directed. The efficient nation will be the nation made up, by aggregation, of individuals possessing the effective power; and national education will be effective in proportion as it secures in the masses the development of this power and its application in infinitely various forms to the national industries and the national service (ibid, p. 1).*

*The next thing which education for efficiency should attend to is the imparting of the habit of quick and concentrated attention. Without this habit there can be no economy of time...The difference between adults in mental efficiency is chiefly a difference in this*

*very power of concentrated attention. The man who has this power will grasp quickly new subjects presented to him, gratifying people who have business with him by giving them prompt and effective attention, seize eagerly upon the contents of books or papers which relate to the affair at hand, and dispatch his daily work...He will do in one minute the work for which an inferior man will need five minutes or five hours. He will effect in every day of his life a great economy of time. There will be no dawdling or vague dreaming in the action of his mind...To rouse, awake, inculcate, and train this power in the child and the youth should be the principal object in education for efficiency (ibid, p. 11-12).*

For Eliot and many of his contemporaries, the challenges of the schooling system were equivalent to the challenges necessary to produce, in each pupil, the powers necessary for efficiency. Such standards required instrumental methods of cultivation. He sees this as different from genius. He explains,

*barbarous men always say of the possessors of such gifts [of genius]: These are not men, they are gods. But we teachers who carry on a system of popular education, which is by far the most complex and valuable invention of this century, know that we have to do, not with the highly gifted units, but with the millions who are more or less capable of being cultivated by the long, patient, artificial training called education. For us and our system, the genius is no standard, but the cultivated man is (ibid., p. 35).*

I challenge any educator today, in the midst of standardization and austerity, to claim that we have moved away from this standard model that Eliot positioned as producing the “cultivated man.” It should come as no surprise that Eliot is considered the father of standardized testing. Eliot valued, and schooling currently values, a human who fits efficiently within a system—a human who can be shaped by manipulative tools so as to maintain other manipulative tools that cultivate oneself and others.

So, the school as an institution is said to value learning. Yet more systemically it is intended to produce the maximum amount and kind of learning deemed necessary for the welfare of each individual and thus the state. The institution produces and maximizes learning which the individual in society consumes (Illich, 1971). To accomplish this, experts set equal standards and standard expectations. There are tests to ensure such standards are being met. Individuals who don't meet or conform to these expectations are deemed not only degenerate in society, in need of remediation, they are also taught that they are failing themselves. They are taught to compare their attainment to society's expectations of them. If a student leaves such an inhospitable environment before a certain age they are returned by a truancy officer. If, in time, they are permitted to leave legally, they face the punishment of dropout status meted out by their peers and superiors. If the culture of a schooled society is inhospitable to this individual, the only space for self-care is in the warm embrace of the home, the television, or counter-culture. There at the very least, a dropout can own the status they've been associated with all along.

The contradictions arising in such modern attempts to standardize social life reach absurd proportion and often in turn defeat their own ends. The managers of schooling are befuddled by the limited capacity of graduates to think on their own—they propose standard training in entrepreneurialism. Principals establish no hazing policies—stating that no person should have to endure rituals that are not of their choosing just to attain admittance into a social club. To this I want to respond the system of schooling *is* hazing—mandatory at that. In the face of such contradictions satire seems our healthiest, if not our only, recourse. This surge of contradictions and the irony it nurtures leads some to predict the culmination and demise of the industrial state apparatus (see in particular Althusser, 1969 for a primary source in this popular claim of antihumanist Marxism). Yet the manipulative practices deemed necessary for such statecraft, live on in the present day and continually morph into ever more benevolent strategies of measurement, prediction, and control.



The institutions of increasingly modern statecraft are infused with the myth of Prometheus and bear the mark of his selective gifts and vision. We would do well to consider the implications of a continued belief in that myth.

### **The old engagement**

I've collected this very short but dense compendium of cultural theory to support within a broad audience the claim that the old engagement was and is a Promethean engagement. At the outset of Chapter Two, I echoed Sherry Arnstein in saying that engagement is a lot like eating spinach, no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. However, institutions sustained on a strict diet of Promethean spinach are in my mind unhealthy. Their diet of pastoral intervention and control is defeating of any purpose as James C. Scott(1998) describes. Engagement is the newest label to describe the public work of institutions—yet I argue that much of the old identity and intent is in this new word.

In railing against the bulwark of institutional Promethean engagement—questioning the myth of pastoralism, I realize I'll likely be labeled a heretic. Critics may say, "Who in their right mind could be against Engagement?" They would misrecognize my argument. I am not against the idea of togetherness, of meeting and conversing with one another as we decide what to do. Yet I am questioning the idea that the institutions we've developed, as they are, possess the ability to convene a more democratic table as they are accustomed to arriving at said table as the inevitable senior partner. I recognize my voice cannot be heard by such institutional manifestations. In this regard, I believe we must affirm that the corruption of the best, is the worst.

Again, I claim that the old engagement is a Promethean engagement. Prometheus is the savior, and his brother Epimetheus is the apathetic fool who looks on and does nothing. If we look to the myth of classic antiquity we see Prometheus who observes the foolishness of his brother, represented in the diseconomy of distributed gifts—his negligence to fit mankind into the established order. Epimetheus was, as Hesiod described, "scatter-brained" or Plato quoting

Socrates “very perplexed,” a state in which he had nothing to give man to ensure his survival against the brute forces of nature. Prometheus, in this moment, *fearing* the loss of human creation, *anticipating* the *certain* demise of the race, stole the mechanic means to *ensure* man’s ability to survive and thrive *against* the elements of nature.

Likewise in old engagement stories we see recited the diseconomy of distributed gifts. In place of our senses we are presented with statistics, from education, to health, to enterprise that attempt to prove the inadequacy of individuals and all of humankind to thrive amid the challenges of the world. Look to the stories in Chapter Two, especially engagement as evidence based intervention, informing, data collecting, and coordinating services. We are consistently presented with maladjusted others in a maldistributed world. In contrast to the scatter-brained and perplexed Epimetheans, there rises a Promethean protagonist who must do something about this—an expert, armed with foresight, who can provide the solution to the human condition. This Promethean is without hindsight—superficial observation of limited data and the fear of the future is all that is certain to him. Everything else is inconsequential. In this thinking, his role is to secure the ever proceeding and inevitable tomorrow. His vision is on a particular brand of progress. He longs for the future. He toils in anticipating it. He “loves” it. But, paradoxically that love of progress he chases is buried within a fear which is its opposite—a fear of death and a return to chaos. The Promethean of old engagement is insistent that the world is inimical to human survival and flourishing as it stands now, at this moment. If not now, it will be very soon. It is a world of danger and scarcity, which necessitates a technical solution from outside common origin—a fire from the peak of Mount Olympus to light a surer highway to the future.

When—not if—Prometheus determines that his solution has failed to secure the limitless satisfaction of an eternal tomorrow, he thinks he must redouble his effort. His task in this fashion is not only without history, it is without limit. Any failure to secure limitless growth, is interpreted by him, as the necessity to anticipate and catalog a lengthier list of problems—his reality of more to fear. Thus he must make ever more cunning interventions into a progressively

more complex world that is increasingly only knowable to him as an abstracted system. He is stuck in a cyclical future in which his work and his suffering never ends. A great eagle gnashes at his immortal liver.

In our current age, the surge of engagement as evidence-based intervention, the need to collect and assemble more data for professionalized decision makers, and the incessant programs for informing people on what and how the intellectual caste deems they should know, are cunning manifestations of the old Promethean engagement. They are interventionary stories born of fearful anticipation of the future. They're spaces and moments where our brothers cannot be trusted to get it right. They're apocalyptic landscapes necessitating the repeated arrival of a savior. This savior identity, the story of the beleaguered hero is not only present in the medicalization of intervention that is the evidence-based movement. It is manifest in the promotion of wicked problems that necessitate ever more wicked and foreign solutions. Furthermore this beleaguered hero is part and parcel of the academic endeavor of critique into which the humanities has defiantly shoved its head. Let us not forget that Prometheus was Marx's favorite myth(Kahn, 2009, p. 40). Prometheus is constitutive of the academic identity that is disciplined across the university and diffused through society by its managerial trainees.

What's most frustrating to me is that people I will come to describe as Epimetheans, people that Prometheans tend to objectify as helpless fools, understand this mechanistic structure. They see it, they feel its presence—better and more than I do. Look to Chapter Three and Chapter Four, which set the basis for Chapter 5, and ultimately this writing. It's unfortunate that Promethean institutions write off notions of Epimethean dissent as manifestations of ignorance and strident anti-intellectualism. I argue this dissent is rather an intentional and well researched rejection, a refutation of elite values and elite visions of the social order that place academics and their institutions at the top of technocratic ways of knowing and being in the world. It is an Epimethean reverberation of a Promethean's own distrust in brotherhood. It's unfortunate and requires that we stop and really listen to one another—a space I've not been building in the preceding language.

I regret that in attempting to highlight the complication of this schism that I'm compelled to adopt a Promethean and interventionist register in my voice. This institutionalized space of a dissertation requires I adopt some of this Promethean voice as a claim-maker. It might feel like this is the only voice that can be heard—and to me it sounds like shouting. Amid the toiling of my conscience I have only privileged that voice for the first half of this chapter. I have attempted with this small action to construct a counterfoil, a defense against the sharp rapier, born of a fear-filled Promethean misunderstanding. I recognize the inhospitality of this voice and the necessity of finding another.

So, in surrendering my interventionist register, my counterfoil, my defense, I hope you don't read what I've written in a Promethean spirit—as a solution, or the extrapolation of a problem in need of more intervention. Do not add this brief and selective history of our institutionalized systems to your lengthier list of problems to solve and to fear. I'm just searching for way for us to stop and think.

In coming to stop, I hope, that you accept or renew an invitation, as I have, to shed fear for love—to shed certainty of death for faith in life. I'm welcoming you to a space where we can face together, a very simple situation as sisters and brothers. It is a space where We—You, and I—can embrace the grace of every moment and decide what to do with ourselves in the time we have together. To learn some of how we might do this, I need to show you a different story of Epimetheus and his brother Prometheus.

### **A new story**

History might be considered the art of selective listening—an always failed attempt to offer a good story. Good storytelling, the good speaking of history, allows us to hear our selves from many angles—it provides us with a multitude of audible perspectives on this We which is I in the here and the now. It illuminates the infinite possibilities of every choice. However, history is corrupted when it becomes a singular story of selective belief—when it dictates our

selves. Thus history must be in a constant cycle of reconsidering. So, let us reconsider the story of Epimetheus and his brother Prometheus.

To preface and justify this reconsideration we must look to the history of Greece. If you look through the textbooks on the history of Western Civilization you will notice the placement of Hellenistic Greece as the progenitor of the Occident. It is curious how Hellenistic Greece, whose leaders placed themselves in the genealogies of Egyptian and Phoenician culture came to represent, during the Enlightenment, the mythical start of Occidental civilization opposed to the Orient (Amin, 2009, pp. 167–168). This misappropriation of origins, and its consequences could be dealt with at length. However I won't cover that ground here. Rather I'd like to recover the myth of Epimetheus lost to classic antiquity. To accomplish this we must explore pre-classical Greece, which antedated Hellenism.

As Dennis Carlson (2002) largely quoting Charlene Spretnak (1984) notes, “

*Sometime in the second millennium B.C.E., a series of invaders from the north swept into Greece—the Ionians, the Achaeans, and the Dorians—which ushered in what is now known as the Hellenic era, beginning about 1000 B.C.E. The newcomers brought along their own patriarchal, warrior gods including all-powerful Zeus, who ruled from the top of Mount Olympus, in the lofty air above the world of Gaia. Spretnak writes that “the pre-Hellenic Goddesses are enmeshed with people’s daily experiencing of the forces in life.” By contrast, “Olympian Gods are distant, removed, ‘up there.’...The pre-Hellenic myths speak of “harmonious bonds among humans, animals, and nature. They express respect for and celebration of the mysteries of the body and spirit,” whereas the Hellenic gods set up laws and hierarchies, separate body from spirit.... Since the feminine was devalued in the new patriarchal Greek culture, this means that the earth goddesses began to take on negative characteristics. Thus Hera was turned into a jealous wife, Athena into a frigid, masculinized daughter, Aphrodite into a sexual toy, and Pandora into the source of all human woes (Carlson, 2002, pp. 30–31).”*

The myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus was not spared from this masculine / feminine, good / bad schism. In the wake of invasion by patriarchal society, Prometheus became hailed as the masculine hero while Epimetheus was derided as the foolish and effeminate ditz. The history of this restorying invites a decidedly important though speculative reconsideration of Epimetheus' role in the myth. What would the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus show us before the splitting of their holistic function in our daily lives?

It's my belief that the overzealous identification with the Promethean myth presented at the outset of this chapter, and which forms a basis for the heroic narratives of Western exceptionalism and intervention, obfuscates the existence of an elemental choice we have in approaching the world around us as full human beings. The Promethean myth, and its current manifestations derived from a perspective of classic antiquity, obfuscates that choice by deriding Epimetheus as a simpleton, and erasing from the record a very important choice he made that took the form of his gift to humanity. I am no expert in speculative pre-Hellenic mythology, but I am a storyteller. With that craft and the assistance of very few written texts (Illich, 1971, pp. 151–167; Kahn, 2009; Les Amis, 2009), below I renew a myth of Epimetheus and his brother Prometheus.

*Before the beginning the world was of chaos. There could exist no mortal creatures only gods and the elements they divined. Yet a time came when mortal beings should arrive and the gods fashioned them of earth and fire in the depths of the world. These beings were without form. Before these beings were to enter the world the gods ordered Epimetheus and his brother Prometheus to equip these beings with their various talents and qualities so that all might live fully in divine creation. Epimetheus, whose name mean hindsight, proposed that he do the equipping. His brother, Prometheus, whose name means foresight, would inspect his work before sending each creature to the world they would inhabit.*

*To some Epimetheus gave brawn without swiftness of feet, while he equipped the weaker with speed; some he gave claws or teeth, while others remained unarmed; for the latter he devised some other means of defense, giving some great size for protection, while others were small enough to hide unnoticed, or escape by burrowing under the ground or flying through the air. Yet he built in each creature the equipment to survive and defy extinction.*

*After ensuring that no race would be destroyed by another, he protected each against the elements. Giving some bountiful fur or tough hide. He ensured that all creatures wore a bed on which to lie. He armored their feet with hooves and callous skin. Next he provided for their food, giving some the roots of trees and to others fruits. To some he gave insects and to others still he gave different animals. Some he destined to have few offspring and others reproduced quite prolifically and thus their race was preserved.*

*Then, toward the end of his work, Epimetheus looked upon man. On seeing the naked and unshod creature before him, Epimetheus came into a state of awe and wonder. How might such a fragile creature exist in the world? Is there hope for such a being? Epimetheus did not know for certain. Perhaps, Epimetheus thought in the hindsight of his labors, these creatures could stand as a testament to the abundance of creation. Perhaps they could learn, bear witness, and create more abundance that he could not foresee amid the relationships of the Earth. Perhaps something so inexplicable, and fragile as a human being, is exactly what a good creation needs among it. It was a fitting idea. He held faith in the fragility of it all.*

*In his wonder, Epimetheus did not sense the fear in his brother who left with a rush. His task complete, Epimetheus came to live with humankind sharing hospitality and abundance with them in the garden of creation. Together they came to nurture the art of*

*meeting and caring for one another and their surroundings in the spirit of freely giving. The balance was fragile and good.*

*Prometheus came soon after bearing a gift. In his foresight he feared humankind too fragile to survive the coming of the future so he gave them mechanical arts and fire known only to the gods. With these they could ensure life by quelling something Epimetheus had never thought of, death. Humanity, accustomed to giving and receiving, accepted these gifts along with the fear they harbored.*

*Little by little humanity's fear, the fear of death, drove them to use the mechanical arts to ensure their survival. The meeting, and dwelling, and caring in interdependent nature was corrupted into humanity's independence and supremacy over nature. Epimetheus, once friend of humanity was derided as a fool for not seeing the dangers that awaited around every corner.*

*Sorrowful at the loss of his friends and his brother, he found joy in the beautiful embrace of Pandora, the All-Giver, daughter of the Earth Mother, who too was reviled as the source of evil—humanity's fear of the unknown death. For Epimetheus and Pandora, hope remained in love, which they could see all around them. They dwelt with it, nurtured it, and shared it freely with all frightened strangers they met at their door. There they celebrated the goodness of fragility while tending the fire, and practicing the now quite necessary but gratuitous gifts of hospitality.*

The myth you read above is an attempt to show another perspective on the way we see the world and our role within it. The myth I'm trying to tell, and the difference it produces from the first telling, foregrounds the choice each brother had in looking upon the world. At that moment, faced with a decision of what to do, their complimentary visions were torn asunder. Prometheus, looking upon humankind was filled with fear and anticipation of tomorrow—he expected the worst. Epimetheus was in a state of wonder. Epimetheus, awe-struck of



humankind within the web of creation—amid his hope of man’s fraternal creativity, became lost to his brother who was fearful for mankind in the approaching hour—amid his expectations of paternal stability. At that moment of deciding the dialogic bridge between their perspectives was broken. The only possibility of their synthesis was in humankind.

I feel it’s important to imagine what each brother might have felt for the other, after that moment of division. As Epimetheus looked on his brother, I imagine he did not sense him as an enemy or as a fool. Epimetheus, I imagine, wasn’t dismissive of Prometheus, he did not absolve himself of his brother or think himself superior. Epimetheus was not Anti-Prometheus. In pre-classical antiquity perhaps neither brother took this antithetic and abandoning perspective. Perhaps they both looked on, as I look on, sorrowful that the bonds between them remained both necessary and quite broken. They sensed responsibility to one another—a practice their division made quite unthinkable and illusory. They felt a lack of belonging that only a sister, a brother, a lover, or a more complete self could provide. Epimetheus, I’d imagine, looked to the past and asked, “What could I have done differently to quell the fear of my brother which led him to such sacrifice and suffering.” In his sorrow, I imagine Epimetheus practicing daily contrition for the loss of his brother. In his present he would feel strongly the compulsion to nurture such hope, faith, and love between all people who knock at his door—always hoping to find his brother there. In this reverent loving, the image of his brother tied to a stone and eviscerated, represented for Epimetheus a pre-modern crucifix—a reminder of his daily task of loving.

I make this story, and believe in it, because I feel it necessary to do so. Amid the whirring of Promethean machines I feel it necessary to play an Epimethean counterpart. As Ivan Illich (1971) once said, quoting some Yevgeny Yevtuchenko (1962),

*We now need a name for those who value hope above expectations. We need a name for those who love people more than products, those who believe that*

*"No people are uninteresting/Their fate is like the chronicle of planets/Nothing within them is not particular/and planet is dissimilar to planet."*

*We need a name for those who love the earth on which each can meet the other,*

*"And if a man lived in obscurity/making his friends in that obscurity,/obscurity is not uninteresting."*

*We need a name for those who collaborate with their Promethean brother in the lighting of the fire and the shaping of the iron, but who do so to enhance their ability to tend and care and wait upon the other, knowing that*

*"to each his world is private,/ and in that world one excellent minute./And in that world one tragic minute./These are private."*

*I suggest these hopeful brothers and sisters be called Epimethean[s].*

In echoing Illich's voice, I too think this role is necessary and I commit myself to it.

In the remainder of this chapter I will attempt to share some stories I've heard of how this Epimethean role contributes to the creativity of new spaces and the joy of new tools. This newness of which I will speak is not the antithesis of the old—just as Epimetheus is not Anti-Prometheus. I use new, " in the sense of the live, the real, in contrast to the inert, the dead. It is not a time distinction—the 'new' (the vital) claims fellowship with all that is 'new' (vital) in the past"(Follett, 1918, Introduction). It is a brotherhood that can go beyond our visions of the world as it is and as it should be. As you will see below the new is a history and present that tries to speak in our reality. It attempts to speak the good news in the grace of the now.

### **The necessity of new spaces**

In the preceding half of this chapter I focused on the construction of the Western concept of the institution. Any person who wishes to take a more Epimethean path will find the

standard institutionalized life to be rather difficult. The institution, as it stands now, favors Prometheanism. These institutions often treat “Epimetheans [as] well-meaning simpletons who have not seen or responded to the future peril”(Kahn, 2009, p. 41). Institutions favor intervention while Epimetheans push incessantly for hospitable togetherness. If you’re an Epimethean you may feel rather out of place as I have. But, don’t assume that any institutionalized scarcity of hospitality is repeated in the world at large. There are abundant spaces for practicing the muscles of Epimethean sensibility. Thankfully, the world remains rather abundantly filled with kitchen tables, swamps, block parties, and hearths. Institutions, as they stand, can’t repeat these spaces. Stick around and such spaces will manage to find you most unexpectedly when you’re ready.

To assist your self-direction toward these spaces I’ve spent the entirety of the dissertation, up until this point, providing stories I’d encourage you to reread and help me look through further. In Chapter Four I’ve introduced stories about the third space from people I would consider as knowing more about the Epimethean ethic than I do. In their voices you can find some perspective on what it might mean for you to play a better role attending to the hospitality of this new space. More appropriately you need to pay attention to the stories all around you and seek your advice, as you seek yourself, among friends. If you represent, embody, or are imposed upon by an institutionalized identity, in Chapter Two I’ve provided a number of stories that are common to institutionalized spaces. Not only will you come to recognize these, but know that regardless of your proclivities many people have been on the receiving end of these engagements and they’ll approach you with a curiosity about your story. If you feel obliged, offer it. Invite a stranger to ruminate on it with you. Reflect the curiosity of anyone that’s interested in your story—maybe they want to be known to you as well.

This curiosity as to the stories of anyone you meet is, for me, the creative cornerstone of an Epimethean space. As Illich quoted above, it necessitates a belief that no person is uninteresting. This promotes a sensibility that attempts to be correlative among an ever more whole We. In that spirit, Epimetheans become adept at holding spaces and making spaces for

nurturing relationships, for telling stories, comforting and challenging one another. Epimetheans are continually in awe of these spaces—a feeling that reflects their recognized inability to process alone all the facets of their experience (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). They know how to nurture the hospitality of free association that might lead to friendship which is ultimately good. As I've said before, for Illich (2002) the quest for our truths “cannot thrive outside of the nourishment of mutual trust, flowering into a commitment to friendship” (p. 242). Finding our truths together requires the relational strength to bear bad news, to hear bad news, to acknowledge and working through differences of opinion. Through these challenging friendships we might actually grow into one another.

Consequently we must know the difference between hospitality and the white liberal dream of safe space. Safe space is a highly relative idea. Often “safe spaces” list ground rules for playing nice. These can put tension out of sight, making consensus a manipulative tool of those that play the nicest. In difference to “safe space” practicing the hospitality Illich speaks of might be labeled as obstreperous. This hospitality is not interested in superficial niceties to save face. Goodness is not about playing nice but trying to know one another and grow into one another—to do collaborative truth making not make compromised expectations for ourselves. This creative storm of togetherness can be quite dangerous and friendships can help us weather the choppy seas.

Yet it's not all dangerous—this space is leisurely but also mindful. For Illich (ibid.) these hospitable spaces, by their very nature would exclude condescension, their simplicity would erase the fears of plagiarism and clientage. The many hosts would dissolve intimidation and such free associations could allow for independent thought. The goodness of these groups would be a goodness of fragility—a goodness that lies outside of ground rules and formalization—institutionalization would corrupt it. “You never know what will nurture the spirit of *philia*, while you can be certain what will smother it. Spirit emerges by surprise, and it's a miracle when it abides; it is stifled by every attempt to secure it; it is debauched when you try to use it” (ibid., p. 236). According to Illich nurturing a skill of hospitality conducive to surprise

“is the only antidote to the stance of deadly cleverness that is acquired in the professional pursuit of objectively secured knowledge”(ibid., p. 235). In Chapter Four I relayed the colonizing effects of institutional fears and these spaces are the counterfoil to such institutions that have proven inhospitable to so many.

Hopeful creativity born of trust in one another is the fellow feeling that these spaces seek. But this seeking isn't engineered—it's exploratory—welcoming deviation and mindful of hospitable limits. We long for this kind of creative belonging. Illich (1973) mentions the term “conviviality” by which he means “the autonomous and creative intercourse among persons”(p. 11). People are constantly creating these spaces around themselves to accomplish the self-work and self-care I described in Chapter Four. In some ways these spaces have defied modernization and rationality. In Chapter Five I storied a course that attempted to nurture this hospitable spirit around the art of writing. In Chapter Three I narrated the drama of my baptism into such a convivial space with Jemila. In Chapter One I storied an early renunciation of my inhospitable institution and the fearful spirit it aroused in me. In Chapter Two I constructed a map from which others and I might recognized the many stories we have to choose from, and the infinite others we might recover or create together. Thus I've tried through my limited perspective, in the limited capacity of a codex, to relay to you some sense of this creative space all around us. I've attempted to foreground your agency and your choice. I've attempted to create what I see as a necessary and new space that is hospitable for you to enter. As I've mentioned in the acknowledgements, this space is not of a particularist authorship but an attempt from me to join with others and relay to you a broader sense of a We. In that way I've tried to use this dissertation as a tool for conviviality(Illich, 1973). But tools bear more discussion in my mind.

### **The creativity of new tools**

Illich focused much of his writing on the notion of tools. In the preceding section I've focused on the spaces that these tools attempt to create. Illich might disagree with my

separation of tools and spaces. For him a space, a library, an institution, a tavern, or a living room is a kind of tool. I've separated them largely because there is much talk these days of space in the realm of collaboration (Anzaldúa, 1996; Dillon, 2011; Kaarsholm, 2009; Redmond, 2010; Steinman, 2011; Tai, 2008). From safe spaces to third spaces the importance of cultural geography has drawn a large amount of society's focus. Perhaps we have a sense of being lost and feel the need to map ourselves into a certain topography as I have done in Chapter Two. It's a practice that might be formed from a sense of anxiety, which many authors have described in reference to the high modernist and postmodern conditions (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 64–68; Jameson, 1991, p. 54; K. Lynch, 1960). However Illich rightfully points out the necessity of not only understanding spaces but also creating spaces such as the ones I described above. This creation requires the good use of our convivial tools rather than the use of manipulative tools which, beyond certain limits, can only create manipulative spaces.

I've previously described manipulative tools in modern statecraft that benevolently if paternalistically intend to produce more efficient economies in systems of health, wealth, learning, and secular salvation. Illich claims that this myopic focus on the efficient production of increased value has established "a world immune to grace" (Illich & Cayley, 2005, p. 225). For Illich, instrumentality has nearly immunized our minds to the goodness of gratuitous things—things which serve no distinct purpose to achieve, to manage, to construct, or to change, but are instead gratuitously good, beautiful, and fortuitously fitting (ibid, p. 226). Illich describes a movement during the Enlightenment where philosophers stirred away from a search for the good to a discussion of the valuable. As Eliot, the quoted progenitor of standardized testing, described in the modern age there should be "no dawdling or vague dreaming." These things, while perhaps enjoyable, are without value in an instrumental society—they don't contribute to *the work*. All of this to say, that there are many good things in this world that aren't deemed valuable by institutional standards of cultivation. The manipulative tools to increase the value of our collective production, delegitimize that which is "merely" good.

In the face of this instrumentality of human action, we run the risk of losing our gratuitous tools for conviviality. We neglect our tools of gratuitous conversation, tools of gratuitous learning, the tools of making music and art for our own pleasure, of making love, of making friends. We still do these acts but now we might sense that we must justify their purpose to ourselves—we make friends for the purpose of networking, we converse for the purpose of debate, we learn for the purpose of being employable, we love for the purpose of feeling happy. Thus, these gratuitous actions become purposeful actions. If they don't efficiently produce the intended value, we think somebody is out of whack—we must reformulate the system to ensure our subsequent success in producing the necessary value. It becomes increasingly hard to think and be outside of this systematized and instrumental rationality.

In response to this instrumental myopia, Illich declares the viable option for individuals to reclaim the goodness of convivial tools. These tools are gratuitous, by modern standards they're frivolous. They don't guarantee or predicate any instrumental value in their use. They are easily and ideally mutable. They can be freely accessed and individuals can use them autonomously in surprising ways. They invite creativity and surprise. They don't require certification. As Illich says, "Their existence does not impose any obligation to use them. They allow the user to express [his or her] meaning in action"(Illich, 1973, p. 23).

Yet there must be limits on the use of tools beyond which they are no longer convivial. Illich, and other authors like E.F. Schumacher (1973) discuss the limitations necessary around a broad range of tools from hand implements to stock exchanges. For instance in regards to transportation, Illich would note that bicycles could be considered a convivial tool, perhaps not as convivial as walking but certainly more convivial than private cars. Private cars require roadways. As cars come to dominate other forms of travel—more and more necessities require the use of a car. Markets must make room for parking so grocers move to the outskirts of cities where property is more available, further exacerbating the need for an automobile. Through the "convenience" of a car, the social cost of obtaining a dozen eggs is now multiplied a hundred fold—for those with and without cars. It seems when we move past human-sized tools we often

run the risk of limiting others capacity to use their own tools that are more human-sized. We “modernize” the notion of poverty. Also, our effects on the natural world press beyond necessary environmental limits for kindly use.

But what about tools of engaging the public? Should there be certain limits on these? Are there limits to using our tools of engagement, beyond which we lessen the ability of others to use more human-sized tools of engagement? In this context I think conviviality and manipulation can involve quite a bit of gray area in practice. And I believe that gray area can benefit from some Epimethean sensibility. While the differences between a hammer and a commodities market may be stark enough to make distinctions clear, the tools of engagement (meetings, consensus conferences, action planning, data collection, etc.) can be quite fuzzy in reference to manipulation and/or conviviality, especially given the benevolent intent of most lead characters in institutionalized stories.

Take the oft-cited tool of a survey for instance. I could, of my own volition employ a “survey” in quite an Epimethean and convivial fashion. Perhaps I had a question I was curious about, for my own benefit, and I asked twenty people how they thought about this or that. I could change my tool if need be to suit my own creativity and others suggestion. My intention wasn’t to secure a job or declare some generalized truth to the world. I was using a tool simply and gratuitously because I thought it might provide a good way to learn about something. On the opposite end of the spectrum I could use a survey, or more to the point a survey could use me, in quite a Promethean and manipulative fashion. The survey might require the use of randomization and calculation of standard deviation and reliability to provide an effective solution to a gap in the literature of a particular system of thinking. Deviation from the instrument would bring its value, not to mention my value, into question. I would need to be trained in the proper use of the survey before I could be readily sure of producing something valuable to general society like Truth. I may need to spend countless hours in expensive schooling to earn the right to use such a tool in the right way. These polarities are quite real.



But let's take an example you might glean from engagement as catalyzing conversations, or negotiating knowledges in Chapter Two. These stories are messy but might inform realities like my own mentioned in Chapters Three, Five, and to some extent Four. Let's say I'm involved in making a survey that was collaboratively created by myself and twelve people representing rather different perspectives and livelihoods. We gathered around because it was a good thing to do but we also had a central issue. The survey we eventually did had some elements of traditional rigor but responses were gathered rather conversationally among our individual contacts. We wanted to provide some input to an institutional process but we also just thought getting some sense of ourselves would be exciting. This story above has the potential to go either way in my book. In that space, as an Epimethean, I think you'd really have to be there, know people around the table, and talk with them on a regular basis to have some clue of whether this tool was manipulative or convivial. The whole project could be just old and dead, boring and mandatory or it could be new and alive, intriguing and creative. People could have each and every opinion—stories could run the gamut. The only way you might get a sense of yourself in such an opaque space is to get to know people—not because you might save the day, or fulfill some objective, but because you're of the mind that those are just good things to do if you're intent on not speaking for others but with others.

In the work of engagement, there are some tools that might lend themselves more to being convivial and others lending themselves to manipulation. In the humanities and social sciences I'm often drawn to deride randomized controlled trials, behavior change programming, big data, service delivery, and criticism for the purpose of criticism as manipulative tools. I find making theater, music, art, and backyard science together—making questions together, and sharing stories together—to lean on convivial tools. I'd say the stories in Chapter Two can affirm some of that. But that's not to say that any one tool can't change its valence if used in different ways. I've tried to use stories in manipulative ways as I've made testament to. It requires close-knit relationships to have some sense of whether you're doing

right by people or not—and even then you might get it wrong. Thankfully, Epimetheans gratuitously use tools that might weave that closeness and the opportunity for forgiveness.

Either in meetings or outside of meetings, in surveys or out, you'll find ways to make and use of convivial tools with others to create things both gratuitous and new. I consider this call to be an Epimethean as an invitation to consistently try being and becoming my fuller self. We all, even academic researchers, have an abundance of tools for building such a life—meeting, dwelling, caring, sharing, feeling, laughing—it's not as if we lack them, or that we must have some process for implanting them in us. We've just forgotten them or relegated them to another part of our reality. But as those “new philosophers” Nietzsche(1960/1886) goads to be “inquisitive to a fault, investigators to the point of cruelty,” can we even think of these convivial tools as important? Would these tools, anathema to the hard sciences and hard critique, that make knowledge flaccid, feminine, or queer, distract us from the real work? I don't think so. We must remember that as friends, lovers, brothers, sisters, sons, or daughters that we have tools for engaging convivially with one another. We can and do use these tools. It's just a matter of being foolish enough to use them here and now.

### **The newness of Epimethean engagement**

In the end the two brothers gave us gifts. Prometheus whose foresight bore a fearful expectation gave us the practical arts and fire to secure our future by controlling it. Epimetheus whose hindsight brought him a sense of awe and hopeful love, gave us an un-gift so that we might come to be with one another. We might meet, dwell, care, nurture, laugh, cry, and in so doing be a living testament to the Earth's abundance. At every moment we choose which of these gifts to use—which of these emotions to be filled with as we approach the world. Again it's the same decision E. B. White made in highlighting the difference between fixing or enjoying, saving or savoring. Through the stories I've shared above we can claim our feelings of fear and love. I believe the greatest of these, the most necessary of these, is love. I realize it's foolish to have faith in others amid the academic space of claiming expertise—it's romantic,

impuissant, vulnerable, and coquettish, if not outright dangerous. It's the Pandora that the paternal Hellenists were so frightened of. It's the feeling in his stomach that Descartes was so dismissive of. It's the dawdling that Eliot was so bent on expunging. Reintroducing it, marrying it, writing it, engaging it, loving it—this Pandora, is the epitome of foolishness in the modern era.

It's no wonder that for Illich, the Epimethean relationship, the friendship, the Epimethean engagement if you will, could only be born of simple and gratuitous acts of foolishly renouncing fear (Illich & Cayley, 2005, p. 170). We throw out the rulebooks, the best practices, the project narratives—foolish acts of love and leaps of faith. It's only in those hopeful spaces, that might at first be frightfully bare, where we can come to meet one another, know one another, and know ourselves. There and only there can we come to know and bear witness to the hope at the bottom of Pandora's jar. In difference to Descartes we'll need all of our senses, and the many ways we might use each of them, to do this. While it may be arduous work—it will take the form of a celebration of awareness of all we are and can be.

I write this because I've felt it. I've felt shame, fear, joy, and hope in the past four years of coming to practice a kind of Epimethean engagement. I've felt it more now than ever in my life. I feel new and alive. As other authors have noted such return to the bodily habitat in our research, as in our lives, is vulnerable (Behar, 1996). In this space, with these tools, we can be mournful (Rosaldo, 1989, pp. 1–21), angry (Lorde, 1981), hopeful (W. F. Lynch, 1965) and thereby ultimately, thankfully, unflattened (Sousanis, 2015). Epimethean engagements nurture the spaces for this expression and fellow feeling by any means necessary—they are uncontrollably honest and refreshing in that way. These engagements perform gratuitous plays, scream for the necessity of screaming, share countless stories, converse for no reason, pour another round of unnecessary drinks. In so doing they search for a fragile goodness that's beyond stale rationality. It's infectious. It's carnival. You're invited—not to study, to research, to understand, but to simply, fully, and freely give and take your part.

I feel, now at the closing, I should temper any advice you might anxiously attempt to glean from a written text like this. People ask me what is this Epimethean ethic? What are the best practices? How do I mobilize it and take it to scale? I can't give that advice. You must seek your answers as a pilgrim among the people you meet—the possible friends who knock at your door. To that necessity I can only offer a humble story of my experience, and my meek interpretation of the stories I hear. Perhaps the most I can try to convey is a story of how I might replay that June day where I first encountered Jemila. Of course I'm not the same anymore. Let's say, if I took a walk tomorrow. Then, I would come down off my hill and somewhere, perhaps in a creek, snuff out that Promethean fire I thought might be useful. With faith, I would stand in awe of the vanishing smoke, mounding the ashes to preserve the embers in my heart. If I came to meet another along my travels, and they asked me what I had to offer, I'd simply say, "I'm not really sure. But we can sit here for a while and I can offer you where I've been." From that moment perhaps the two of us, or the more of us, can come to nurture a new flame, from shared embers, that warms us all. The fire is new but not foreign. We embody a commonwealth—unnecessary and beautiful. Perhaps later as that fire is tended and becomes ceremony a Promethean brother or sister will decide to travel another road with that flame—a gift to share. I'd confront them, as Jemila did me—insisting that the cycle begin anew. With that, with me their Epimethean counterpart, they could choose. Maybe in a faithful love, the torch is snuffed, and we come to meet one another again—sharing our stories in the dark.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Storytelling and the Art of the Possible**

*Inspired by Ben Okri*

Academia is an example of a classic institution. It is not, by design, convivial. You must earn the right to speak in it and display your credentials to be heard. This dissertation is complicated by, and complicates, that ritual. I've had to make choices about how to go on with, or in spite of, this complication. In spaces I've foolishly renounced this ritual by separating narrative from interpretation (Chapters One, Three, and Five), and echoing voices without academic verification (Chapter Four). Chapter Two with its accompanying Appendix C is the only space where I've attempted to include a lengthier discussion of method and to be methodical in the more academic sense. The exclusion of an all-encompassing theory section was deliberate for reasons I've explained in the Preface. I intended to *show* you what storytelling can accomplish, rather than *tell* you. I've attempted to create a performance. I limited the amount of interruptions—my explaining of what I was doing, so that you might focus more on what is happening in the now—in this written space, and more importantly the space around you. In this way, the performance attempted to return you to some self-chosen and perhaps “forgotten organ of perception”(Appelbaum, 1995, p. 107).

Here in this appendix I will explain myself. Here I will try to defend my right to speak with a decidedly less academic tone among an academic audience. But I don't begrudge this necessity since it's my privilege and responsibility to share something I partially understand in the spirit of openness and thanksgiving. I will say that what is to follow is an essay, 'an attempt' in the classic use of the term to try taking where this dissertation has led me, back into a

theoretical discussions of narrative. I'm pushing against the grain of much research in that genre, especially research coming through social science that is attempting to frame narrative as a paradigm. The discussions I start here warrant further research that is beyond the limit of this appendix. In time I'd hope to refine this attempt with a lengthy archaeology of the story.

#### *Some concerns*

Thomas King(2005) repeatedly says, "The truth about stories is that that's all we are"(pp. 2, 32, 62, 92, 122). This repetition is purposeful—he wants you to dwell in this statement, because you do dwell in it. As Ben Okri(1997) says, "we live by stories, we also live in them"(p. 46). I think we can all recognize that this is true on the surface—but perhaps not as deeply as King and Okri want us to receive this truth. For instance, we can acknowledge that stories help us mediate our experience and add some meaning to our lives. This mediating role that stories play is true but this basic claim can contain within it a fearful doubt. This doubt takes the form of fearing that the stories we tell, might be tricking us into thinking the world is as we story it. They're imperfect mirrors in that way. Much like Descartes' doubt about the senses, Prometheus' fear of Pandora, stories cannot be trusted. Those that trust stories are liable to be sucked in by their beautiful magic and fooled. This Promethean doubt can lead us down the same path, philosophically, that Descartes took—toward the need to tell more rational stories—to only tell true stories. Or further, to not tell stories at all—only speak rationally or just do Science.

In terms of Western philosophy we should probably start by talking about ontology, the nature of being. The ontological basis for Descartes philosophy was the *cogito*—I think therefore I am. To him, there was not any other thing you could be sure of. The further story is that his mind, his thinking object, could be separated and should be separated from his body. This is the basic ontology of what Jerome Bruner(1986) would call logico-reductivism. It is an ontology of nature, which attempts to act outside of time, outside of the body, and outside of the social. Narrative takes as its basis, something quite different in my mind.

As Descartes posited, the nature of a human being—is a thinking being. But as many philosophies that predate Enlightenment Rationalism would posit, the human being—is a social being—a relational being—dare I say, a spiritual being not wholly unlike many others. Understanding this being requires something that Descartes' ontological claim leaves out. It can take the form of the skeptical doubt if you like. Bakhtin, when approached with "I think therefore, I am" returned with a further skeptical question of "Who now is this "I" that is speaking?" The human being as a social, conversational, and relational being begs this second question but also quite a bit more. It is my belief that this awe-inspiring and hopeful questions are, in the history of world, the elder brother to Descartes' Promethean doubt. To Western eyes it may seem like we now have the need to construct an Epimethean ontology.

Yet, I use this word ontology in reference to narrative with some hesitation. A frustration I have with the scholarly approach to this ontological foundation of narrative, most often supported in the arena of social science, is two-fold. First, there is a dominant supposition that this narrative notion is a new development—or that scholars are just now coming to understand narrative fully by thinking about it as a paradigm—a system of thought. Furthermore this new development of narrative as a paradigm is supposed to be a good and benevolent thing. In regards the first point, as assumed in numerous texts, the narrative turn, or return, was heralded by an intellectual movement toward the social—a popular rise in social psychology and social philosophy toward and after the middle of the last century (Bruner, 1986; Heron, 1981; Spector-Mersel, 2010). I'm hesitant to repeat these roots of the "new" paradigm through a similar genealogy or repeat what these scholars are attempting to do. I believe these genealogies leave out a great deal of the Epimethean spirit by neglecting to wonder at the pre-classical role of storytelling which just might defy our modern habit of thinking systematically.

In my mind, these scholars are attempting to fit narrative within a system of thought. This attempt is born of a certain anxiety—a need to be taken seriously by Westernized conceptualizations of philosophy. As Jane Tompkins (1987) points out, "You can't talk about your private life in the course of doing your professional work; you have to pretend that it's

epistemology, or ontology, or phenomenology, or metaphysics, or something ‘more exalted’ than merely the personal, something separate and separated from what’s happening inside your heart or your personal life, something that potentially could embarrass or humiliate you in the presence of your colleagues”(p. 169, quoted in Bochner, 2012, p. 159). In this way, just as in Science, academics try to build and use another system, a narrative system, within which we can secure ourselves and explain our narrative habit—a curious part of our being which doesn’t seem to always fit. A justification of stories goes something like this, we tell stories because there’s an ontological basis for my being in relation to everything, therefore there’s a narrative epistemology whereby we can know ourselves, and certain methodologies which support this knowing and improvement of our subsequent acting. This system of thought is not without merit, just as any system can serve a purpose. But the systematization of narrative, the further development of narrative tools into systems of thought is risky. It can result in the operationalized use of story—whereby stories are used as tools to convince, to sway opinion, to incite fervor, to *act on crowds* and ultimately to speak for people.

Stories become a convenient, economical, and comforting delivery system at the disposal of various other systems. In an effort to make stories fit into a Western idealization of the modern system—many benevolent academics may inadvertently contribute to the use of story as a manipulative tool rather than as a convivial tool. By insisting that stories fit within the modernist project, these authors might be attempting to repeat the reductive act of the rationalist. Stories being understood to fit in systems become only worthwhile when they achieve some causative result in the modern system. The story might become only defensible in so far as it can be used by a system to produce instrumental value. Consequently, scholars and practitioners claim the utility or efficiency of storytelling in marketing(Klaus, Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010), in campaigning for office(Ganz, 2011), in national defense(Committee on Homeland Security, 2014), and in grassroots organizing(Reinsborough & Canning, 2010). In so far as this system of storytelling is used on crowds of people, the modern storyteller, regardless of any benevolent intent they may have, can become a propagandist. Modern storytellers are



often trying to sell you something. As Illich (1971) points out, in a systematized society “the road to happiness is paved with a consumer’s index”(p. 40) and now stories and our systematic understanding of how they work in and on society can contribute to that happiness too.

My uneasiness with this modern and constructivist manifestation of narrative as a system of thought is why I consider Ben Okri such a refreshing storyteller. His intention in writing is to keep you guessing, to maintain in you a sense of immanent wonder rather than certainty. He’s not interested in pursuing what narratives “are” in a system of thought as much as he is dwelling in a sense of what a narrative could be through the gratuitous and creative act. “Certainty” as he says, “has always been the enemy of art and creativity, more than that it has been the enemy of humanity”(Okri, 1997, p. 30). Unlike intellectual systematists, Okri believes stories are instances of possibility that, like art, are continually surprising us, giving us comfort, or fear, or magic sometimes, but not always as the moment calls for. Breaking the logical constructs of storytelling is what makes a story both interesting and awesomely believable. Rather than take a Promethean sensibility to stories, fearing what they are and attempting to fit them into a system of objects and thought—wherein they might be used more economically or efficiently—Okri helps me dwell instead in a sense of wonder at what narratives might be or become, or indeed are and have been, in the convivial space.

Specific acts of creation, in my mind often lend themselves to conviviality in small spaces, in spaces where the individual is more apparent, which may not always be readily surveilled from an institutional vantage. In institutions, communication must have a more instrumental purpose. Contrastingly, smaller spaces can nurture more gratuitous acts. I forget where I heard this exactly but it makes sense that as recently as a century ago, human beings were rarely spoken to in crowds. You had some instances of mass media in the newspapers of modern cities, there as well you might attend a political speech, read an edict, or listen to a foreman recite the day’s work. These exceptions aside, most human communication occurred between small groups of people. Communication wasn’t an instrumentalized system necessarily but rather a more organic act. I’d wager in these spaces, narrative as being—

narrative as a distinct and instrumental tool, could more readily defy any means of capture. In these spaces gratuitous stories spoken within a body might allow a human being to *shed* some of their being, by participating in the wonder of becoming. This last statement bears quite a bit of discussion and I'll attempt to start that conversation for the duration of this essay by wedding two rather odd bedfellows—poststructuralism and theology—both of which can help us to think relationally, and hermeneutically in an inherently flawed kind of way. As my discussion progresses I'll bring these theories of intersubjectivity and interpretation into a discussion of the process by which we might come to tell stories.

Regrettably most of the authors I'll be citing below come from within Westernized systems of thought. I know that other stories exist which declare the particular truths I'm showing below. Any number of humans could present another picture, which might lend vision to my own—even by declaring an antithetical sentiment. I'm excited to learn more from these throughout my life but for now in the spirit of sharing I hope to present a particular story. Below, I'll try to relay a picture of narrative as being through becoming before moving on to a sense of how we might look upon narratives in a spiritual sense, and as integral to how we might learn.

#### *Narrative as being through becoming*

Since the beginning I feel humankind has labored for belonging—this anxious work was born of a particular fear that human beings or at least some human beings don't fit into the world. We somehow don't make sense. Throughout time using our practical and thinking arts we've built systems of thought in an attempt to explain ourselves—once and for all, thinking somehow we might like to dwell in that stable comfort. In focusing on the problem of how human kind might fit into the structure of the world, we've neglected, at times, the more gratuitous acts of being in the world. We've neglected our tools for meeting, dwelling, loving, and caring—tools for being *through* becoming. This being through becoming does not necessitate a hierarchical structure—or a dichotomy between sides—though those pictures may

be illuminating they may negate or repurpose our convivial tools. Rather than using tools to *structure* our being in the world—to (re)discover, and (re)incorporate our conviviality we must instead use our tools to revivify the acts or arts of becoming. We must always try to spark creativity at the limits of the known.

This might sound rather fuzzy for the moment, but it has roots not only in theology but also in the particular brand of phenomenology central to poststructuralism which I'll cover in this first section. Thinkers associated with this movement have been attempting for decades to illuminate the structures of thought, and the disciplining of the body, that limit modern life. In so doing they've heralded the move to think in difference to grand narratives, even proclaiming their death. They've critiqued the structures of modern society to a point where a growing number of people feel comfortable claiming an affinity with the postmodern. For a long time the rationale for this "new" thinking was lost on me. It seemed to me, given the focus of authors such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, that this philosophy was just a repetition of the structuralist tendency to preference the structural albeit through critiquing it. I didn't see the hopefulness amid all the academic buzz—indeed sometimes I still don't. The poststructuralists' illumination of vast networks of power seemed to confirm the overdetermination of my being from the outside—in a similar vein as the antihumanist structuralists. It did not relieve my angst or my anxiety as to who I was. It tied me in knots.

However, with time I came to see how these knots of relations could in fact be liberating in so far as I could seemingly choose to create them, combine them, avail them to my self-chosen actions. In so doing I had to acknowledge any particularist conception of selfhood as a comforting illusion with the potential to be quite different. Merleau-Ponty describes the awe-inspiring image of human perception that can be both frightful and hopeful. He says, "whenever I try to understand myself, the whole fabric of the perceptible world comes too, and with it comes the others who are caught in it"(Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 15). In such a way, as my thinking of myself brings all of these others into myself, a human being is as Merleau-Ponty(1962) said, "a knot of relations." Yet this is not a Gordian knot. It isn't a knot that must be

untied by some sort of bold Promethean action. For Merleau-Ponty, we shouldn't spend such effort in trying to think ourselves out of this very large box(Reynolds, 2014) as much as we should try to become ourselves in such a box—not in a hierarchical, or limiting sense of course, but in a decentered way, and a creative way.

To understand more of how poststructuralists think about non-hierarchical or unsystematized relations as creative devices we can look to Jacques Derrida(1966) as well as Giles Deleuze & Felix Guattari(1983, 1987, 1994). These three writers in addition to Merleau-Ponty made ample use of metaphors that were inadequate to describe exactly what they wanted to convey—but such is the nature of the sign in poststructuralist thought. Derrida repurposed the term *bricolage* brought from Lévi-Strauss(1966) to describe the act of making do with what one has around them. The *bricoleur*, according to Derrida(1966), paraphrasing Strauss, uses “the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous—and so forth.” In this kind of story there can be a foil, a different counterpart to the *bricoleur*, of the engineer. Yet in difference to Strauss, Derrida states that any idea of an “engineer” as a human being is a myth, a type of transcendent godhead outside of human experience. Derrida points out that the engineer and myth is also a *bricoleur*. This complicates structuralist notions of identity in the sense that you cannot get outside of *bricolage* and give it structure as an engineer. You, as a seemingly singular entity are in fact a *bricolage* as is anyone else or any other supposed singularity. You cannot get outside of these movements. Such an idea can leave the question of being in a terrifying flux.

Yet, for a poststructuralist this is decidedly the point, identity is to be constantly in a state of becoming(Stephenson, 2010, p. 57). By destabilizing the common notion of identity, by decentering it, poststructuralists are trying to embrace multiplicities. It is through this embrace of relation that Deleuze & Guattari(1987) propose a picture of the rhizome. Speaking in an

almost mythopoeic prose they describe a rhizome, a multiplicitous singularity, a self as wolf pack, a discourse if you will, as “ceaselessly establish[ing] connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles”(ibid., p. 7). Being and becoming as rhizome, developed as a refutation of Freud’s classic psychoanalysis. Deleuze & Guattari position Freud as consistently attempting to trace meaning back to the signifier, the patient, rather than acknowledging the map a patient provided of their relational being. In turn Deleuze & Guattari’s decentralization of the signifier and the sign was a refutation of structural semiotics proposed by Chomsky. In both of these cases the analyst, Freud or Chomsky, looks to a tree with a question as to its roots—a dualism that may be appropriate in, or appropriated by, the abstracted “real” of the past but which lends little understanding to the rhizomatic nature of the short-term, and particularly the possible future realized through a creative act, which can take its cue from anywhere (ibid., p. 16). In difference to a tree, “a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and...and...and...’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’”(ibid., 25). Deleuze & Guattari use the rhizome to “establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings” (ibid.). In so much as they help accomplish this they speak to the concern I began this essay with—the concern that the story is systematized into typical Western logic within normalized binaries of thought and systems of ontology, epistemology, and methodology that interlock and fit in some structured way. This unnecessarily binds our creativity—we limit the kinds of stories we might tell for instance.

You can see in Chapter Two how I construct a diagram of the engagement story as interplay between two rather classic binaries of the self and the other, and the world as it is and the world as it should be. This is a particular language game, common to engagement stories, that establishes certain limits for what can be considered legitimate, appropriate, or strategic

engagement. Poststructuralism points to the necessity of shaking these binary distinctions thereby unleashing further potentials for being and becoming. Of particular note to the disruption of the whole engagement project is pushing on the limits of the self/other distinction. As I believe Chapter Four points out, there's an interplay between people that is unavoidable in engagement and a central story pointed to the necessity of knowing oneself through knowing others—a relational knowledge that could come about through some practical actions. I believe narration can be such a practical action—not because I can narrate myself truthfully and so can you—but because narration is both creative and imperfect.

It is a central claim of the poststructuralist that the self is illusory in this singular sense. From this point it may seem inconsequential to give narratives. What is the point or even the possibility of narration? Judith Butler (2005) starts such a discussion with Nietzsche's declaration that a primary reason for the narration of the self begets from an accusation—it is the result of an authoritarian act of asking "Was it you?" (p. 13). However this mode of narration proposed by Nietzsche, was limited to a sense of discourse within the juridical. Foucault, she points out, attempts to establish the necessity of narration in a pre-modern sense of *poiesis*—a practice of making (ibid., p. 17). Narrative is a making of the self, not from anything, but of what is available in the historical specificity of the moment—to respond to an event, not unlike Derrida's bricolage. Ethics in such a narration is an act of delimiting oneself in a given way that also exposes the limitations of the historical scheme. Thus for Foucault, the narration, the delimiting of the self is an ethical act that is "inventive, requires inventiveness, and even...comes at a certain price" (ibid., p. 18). To explain this narration of the self further as a moral act, Butler discusses opacity.

For Butler the poststructural claim that you can't recover your self from the limitlessly relational, makes "one opaque to oneself" (ibid., p. 20). This opacity doesn't negate ethical behavior within the narrative function but situates it. "Indeed, if it is precisely by virtue of one's relations to others that one is opaque to oneself, and if those relations to others are the venue for one's ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subjects

opacity to itself that it incurs and sustains some of its most important ethical bonds”(ibid). In this way the narrative act can be more than just a response to the juridical accusation in reference to punishment—the narrative can be an opening through the question of “Who are you?”(ibid., 31).

From here, Butler delves into the ethical responsibility of narrating oneself, within the acknowledged limits of one’s ability to perform such an act. She gives an anxious recounting:

*My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story. I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision. There is that in me and of me for which I can give no account. But does that mean that I am not in the moral sense accountable for who I am and for what I do? If I find that, despite my best efforts, a certain opacity persists and I cannot make myself fully accountable to you, is this ethical failure (ibid., 40)?*

Butler is posing questions about the immanent failure of narration so as to *try* and keep an eye focused on the good and ethical. But it seems rather impossible to be sure of anything beyond a certain point, including ethics—once again that is precisely the point. Butler suggests that a new sense of ethics actually comes from this failure.

*When we claim to know and to present ourselves we will fail in some ways that are nevertheless essential to who we are. We cannot reasonably expect anything different from others in return...To know the limits of acknowledgement is to know even this fact in a limited way; as a result, it is to experience the very limits of knowing. This can constitute a disposition of humility and generosity alike: I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are constituted in partial opacity to themselves (ibid. p. 42).*

Herein lies the central ethic of poststructuralism that was lost on, or at least highlighted as insufficient by, critiquing authors like Martha Nussbaum(1999). The relationality of being and becoming is always in a state of opacity and thus establishes relational limits on our knowledge and thus our ethical actions with one another. Giles Deleuze in his praise of Foucault perhaps sums it up most succinctly. He says Foucault, and by extension I would say other poststructural thinkers and doers have been the ones within philosophy “to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others”(quoted in May, 1994, p. 131).

Now, finally I’d like to take a position that narrative can be a medium, a language game of profound variety, through which poststructural notions of being and becoming can practice such an ethic in the spirit of grace and humility. I position this is as somewhat different than the most visible artifacts of poststructuralist scholarship—but precursory and embedded within a relation to the critical and creative activities for which poststructuralism is most often known. As James Williams (2004) points out, “different varieties of poststructuralism are given names that correspond to practical critical and creative activities: deconstruction (Derrida), libidinal economics (Lyotard), genealogy and archaeology (Foucault), transcendental empiricism (Deleuze), dialectics (Deleuze, Kristeva).” These are forms, in my mind, of what Illich (1973) would term counterfoil research—they provide guidelines which can be used “for detecting the incipient stages of murderous logic”(p. 92). As Mark Seem cites Illich in the Introduction to Deleuze & Guattari’s(1983) *Anti-Oedipus*, noting such counterfoil research, freed from the psychoanalytic framework can defend the space for “groups to multiply and connect in ever new ways” thus opening up to the hope found through what Deleuze and Guattari termed a “desiring-revolution.” This counterfoil research takes the form of an intervention, as I’ve shown in the first half of Chapter Six. But in keeping with the ethic of poststructuralism we must acknowledge that this form of intervention must not assume to speak for others. It can, however try to temporarily solidify an expression of a more collective voice, an attempt to fold the limits of being into a discourse at the center of becoming—either through the multiplicitous author, or through the mutuality of a group. Either of these identities, author or group, is inherently



flawed and opaque, but not wholly unnecessary. To embrace this creative flaw, this ethical dilemma, I propose a medium of interbeing in stories that can both lead to the creative act of counterfoil research and can also exist precursory to such intervention. I'll speak about this use of narrative for the rest of this essay.

To ground this notion of narrative gratuity in a myth I'll refer us back to Prometheus and Epimetheus again. Prometheus was fearful that human beings did not fit into the world and intervened through a theft, disguised as a gift, of something transcendent—something outside of the material world. This thievery could secure human existence within his thought structure of the world—stabilizing it. Philosophies built as structures, systems of thought, attempt the same—they attempt to construct adequate means of strategically coming to more certain understandings about the world. In a different way, Epimetheus on seeing humans in the limitless relationality of being and becoming was instead brought to a state of awe. As Keltner and Haidt(2003) comment, awe is “a perceived vastness, and a need for accommodation, defined as an inability to assimilate an experience into a current mental structure”(p. 297). Epimetheus in awe of all that relational reality is and could be, made a choice to go beyond accommodation through structure and embrace ambiguity—to participate in the *awesome acts of becoming*—an immersion in stories. From here he might at times, attempt to explain the *awesomeness of his being* through the act of storying—a flawed attempt to explain himself. This cycle of the storied form encircles his immanence—his opaque and never-ending theology.

Stories, in my mind, can be and become the seasonal forms of this Epimethean embrace. Our showing stories of ourselves, whether in the form of our spoken word or academic research is a flawed outpouring of our being. In sharing, the story can be an enticement to the fear-filled or beautifully awesome. Our flawed embrace of other stories an attempt at becoming. In acknowledging oneself rhizomatically, as a body without organs, or a being of bricolage—stories become not only our background—they are us. They become us. This is the deepness with which I think Okri is trying to embrace us with. In this simple admission, that we are

stories, is the statement of a real and virtual, but also unnecessary, limit. Our centers are bounded and traversed by the limits of the stories we hear and tell. We can grow stagnant in our limits—in our stories, our being. There's a danger in this. As Wittgenstein noted, "resting on your laurels is as dangerous as resting when you are walking in the snow. You doze off and die in your sleep." Perhaps instead, loving life, we embrace the option to desire more stories that don't quite fit. We attempt a becoming. Yet the more stories we stack on, the more opaque our centers and limits. We are the thousand plateaus. We increasingly become the shared embrace of Epimetheus and Pandora, the empty amphora wherein hope lies. Hope lies in this opacity of our being. This is a rather beautiful story which many poststructuralists would hesitate to tell. It's a story of laurels you should not rest on. In that fashion we must also share the frightening stories so that we don't fall asleep in the snow. This multivocal sharing encircles, for me, the Epimethean tool of convivial storytelling.

This narrative gratuity, the gratuitous sharing of stories and making of new stories, the repetition of old stories, the tool of stories, lies in an ethics and goodness outside of rules and outside of an intention to cultivate others (Stephenson, 2010, p. 155). In such fashion, I'd like to share the sense that stories can be included within a discussion of the Spirit which I'll explore in the next section. I'm indebted to Andrea Stephenson for her work in linking poststructuralism to a sense of Spirit. She notes the contributions of Christian scholars in particular describing process pneumatology, a relational picture of Spirit, *Pneuma*, breath (ibid., p. 160). She suggests in her work that a poststructuralist notion of Spirit is not a transcendent and omnipotent God, but a spirit that is multiple (through repetition and difference), immanent, infinite, intimate, rhizomatic, material/corporeal, and virtual (ibid., p. 161). Her work helps me relate poststructuralism's rhizomatic concept of being and becoming, to Illich's discussion of *philia* and the necessity of *conspiratio* to hospitality. Stories in this fashion can be one of many gratuitous tools of interbeing.

*Stories as Spirit: glimpsing philia*

Spirit, *pneuma*, *spiritu* is breath. *Conspiratio* is the act of sharing breath—the sharing of Spirit. In the Christian liturgy of the earliest church it was a mouth-to-mouth kiss between believers (Illich, 2002). Though this practice fell out of fashion we cannot resist sharing this breath with one another if we want to remain alive. You breathe, I breathe, we breathe. It is repetitive, but each breath is in difference to the prior and the latter. Breath is multiplicitous not just between human beings but also between this notion of us and the whole of respiring life. Breath *is* immanent life. It is a coming and going in the materiality of molecules. I cannot elude this rhizome of the real and virtual—I can only come to make intimacy with it. We can think of this relationality as organic yet it is more appropriately outside of systems, approaching the infinite, “orgiastic, tumultuous, and chaotic” (Stephenson, 2010, p. 173).

Within this space of Spirit, a story is a threshold through the sustaining breath of a body—a kind of shared intimacy. But the story is not object, it is not to be received as object to be systematized, it too is rhizome, it too is bricolage, it too is a manifestation of immanence—like breath. Perhaps we need a different form of vision than the representational correspondence. Perhaps a philosophy of stories isn’t in search of the story that is most true—the truest mirror—the product of the policing gaze. Stories as rhizomes might need different eyes. The training of these eyes has much to do with ethics, a question of personal state and attitude—a propensity that Illich (1995, p. 48) would call a stance. In the early church there was a large debate over the appropriateness of the icon that I believe can inform how we might see through stories. Christianity stood in difference to both Judaism and Islam in centralizing the importance of iconography but maintained an importance in the training or stance of the eye when looking upon an icon. John of Damascus in the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicea (787 CE) prevailed in his defense of the icon by establishing its difference from a pagan idol. With a pagan idol, a person or a god is conjured into being—it is a literal manifestation. The icon is also not the fresco, created by an artist from his or her own imagination. A Christian icon, for a believer, was “a threshold beyond which the devout eye, reaches into the realm of the

invisible”(ibid., p. 56). It is this classic stance of reverent optics that I believe forms a guide for the poststructural communion with story. The story is neither a pure conjuration of being, a mirror of it, nor a manifestation of pure creativity. The story is a threshold through which any singularity might come to view immanence albeit while acknowledging multiplicitous results. It is a kind of hermeneutic eye though not one assuming or intending a singular, transcendent point of focus.

To begin bringing all of these concepts over and into a discussion of narrative practice, let’s consider a circle of people that are sharing stories from their lives. I share a story, an imperfect *bricolage* born of my relational self—a failed attempt but a felt, necessary attempt nonetheless. In the act of storying I’ve shared a vulnerable threshold. Perhaps my hands shook. Perhaps another takes a step through this tentative threshold and creates another possibility for our becoming. Another may story a threshold in an unintended different direction. There is no real goal in this sharing, not in the sense of trying to ensure we as storytellers produce something of “value” other than goodness and gratuity. The ethic that keeps this circle alive and breathing is the ethic that you cannot speak for others. This is an ethic born of opacity, which as the circle goes around only grows out. You realize in the instance of the circle you have given only one story of yourself out of many other possibilities—you can sense the same possibility in others that map ever more distant horizons. You attempt another failure, and the circle grows larger. This storytelling space is the breathing philosophy of the AND.

This notion of the story as threshold, as rhizomatic possibility into an infinite immanence, presents a kind of affective opening. This opening of bodies through story is a kind of Spirit, a kind of breathing, multiplicitous and intimate. It is in this storying—an attempt by a body to show the “present as affected by its imperfect relationship to the past(Ahmed, 2004, p. 184)” —that we bring the vulnerability for being moved. “Emotions involve readings of the opening of bodies to be affected”(ibid., 185). Fear can slam the door--shutting a body off to other stories. Stepping through this threshold or opening another, continuing to breathe, affirms

hope. This hope might turn into a commitment—into a friendship a deeper and wider kinship. Keep breathing. Keep telling stories. Keep hearing stories. Keep stepping through them.

Epimethean tools lend themselves to this kind of artistic repetition. We use them gratuitously. In using stories as an Epimethean tool we find a goodness, but never a goodness that is settled. Filling my being with stories—different stories—will make my being more opaque, more rhizomatic, more nomadic than settled. Here the poststructural ethic claiming the indignity of speaking for others becomes all the more haunting. But, embracing ghosts, we let stories speak through ourselves in the sense of freely giving.

It is in the sense of freely giving stories, a kind of with-ness breathing of *conspiratio*, that we might begin to nurture all we might hope for in stories—a sense of hospitality, an opening of the expanded self, that lends itself to *philia*, to fellow feeling, and friendship. As I said in Chapter 6 “these hospitable spaces, by their very nature would exclude condescension, their simplicity would erase the fears of plagiarism and clientage. The many hosts would dissolve intimidation and such free associations could allow for independent thought.” But in conversation with Butler (2005) we must acknowledge “the limits of acknowledgement... [which] can constitute a disposition of humility and generosity alike: I will need to be forgiven for what I cannot have fully known, and I will be under a similar obligation to offer forgiveness to others, who are constituted in partial opacity to themselves (p. 42). Illich would call this the need for a doxology of both gratuity and contrition. We must receive gifts that are freely given and carry them on in a spirit of gratuity. When we adulterate this cycle, or misunderstand, we must practice contrition—a sorrow born of our opacity wherein we must forgive others and ourselves. It is this reverent fellow-feeling and commitment that leads to friendship and a deeper sense of *conspiratio*. Illich considered these spaces necessary for allowing surprise and friendship that ultimately, in a poststructuralist sense, might produce some foundation shaking truths that can be shared(see Kahn, 2009, p. 29). It’s an odd thing to think about, that all truths are born of a certain breathing, a with-ness breathing—a *conspiratio*.

It's increasingly odd as *conspiratio* with time became the structured root of the modern word conspiracy—the objectification of the suspected story. In so much as we all breathe we can be suspect that others don't breathe as we do—because indeed they don't but they also do. We can share more stories and that might bring some sense of opacity to our differences—a threshold. It's an engagement born of a kiss—a commitment to sharing our breath. Yet anymore the word conspiracy is thrown out of structures, structures of thought, structures of being, structures of power—they aren't of people in the rhizomatic sense of an individual's singularity. Conspiracy is a word used to silence the breath of the breathing. The structures of the world don't breathe—these automata have no need of breathing. They have no need of breathing my air though they might utilize it for their purposes. These structures are the suspected subjects of poststructuralist critique—gender, fundamentalism, sexuality, capital, race, and the structures of inquiry itself. Human beings at any moment can decide to renounce these structures, divorce them—stop breathing life into them. The tools of poststructural critique—genealogy, schizoanalysis, deconstruction, libidinal economics, are attempts to expand the cracks for this kind of renunciation. But there are more tools than the pickaxe and the counterfoil. There are tools other than shouting, though that must always be a voice available to us. The story can shout. The story is multivocal. Like all rhizomes it produces power of differing and refracted valence. We need to expand the ways we might breathe together.

*The possibilities and limits of the voices in this dissertation*

I have an abiding frustration with the voice of poststructuralist writing in academia. It seems to never come out of that opaque ether central to (and limiting) the (post)philosophy. The poststructuralist writer spends quite a bit of time (de)qualifying themselves and (h)edging their bets with parentheticals. I get it. All bets are off. There are no guarantees in the breathing life. Sadly I think this downplays some author's use of the first person voice to say anything. In claiming it indignant to speak for others, some authors never seem to speak of themselves—

perhaps that voice is for some just a structure of narcissism—a vestige of the ego. They'd much rather remain ethereal than risk becoming corporeal. It's much more vulnerable to be a body with organs. In that vein I'm thankful for writers like Sarah Ahmed(2004) and Ruth Behar(1996) who write in a personal voice that can be frightfully and beautifully honest. I'm also grateful for writers like Ben Okri that can hold the tension between this ethereal and corporeal life with exceptional grace. Given these examples and all the qualifiers in the sections above I'm going to try and dance around something that is very dear to my heart and forms the backbone of this dissertation—learning—about life and oneself. I think this learning requires a multitude of voices.

To discuss learning I'll first story the flow of this dissertation—reflecting back on the deliberate and not so deliberate voices that have led me to this poststructural treatment of stories. Once again I qualify this story as a fabrication, a failed attempt at history but a necessary vulnerability as well.

I began this dissertation by setting myself on a path to *encircle* this idea of engagement—to learn about it in the course of learning something about myself. I'm pleased with my attempt to take on both of these tasks at once, flaws and all. The idea that we should try to encircle things, rather than know them in some sort of essential sense, comes from Shawn Wilson's(2008) *Research as Ceremony*. In this book he talks about the need in research to move away from a notion of triangulation and toward a more opaque but perhaps more honest encirclement of something. I've tried, within a certain limit of my ability, to encircle this idea of engagement by showing you stories.

The first attempt, born of my own anxiety and a sense of being marooned, is the rather structural interpretation of texts in Chapter Two. I attempted to encircle a number of stories within the limited archive of peer-reviewed literature and present them in a way that remained honest to the authors who wrote these stories. I developed a structure that in many ways disciplines the engagement story written in academic texts. Subsequently this structure affected the product of those developed fictions. But it developed stories that if looked on through the

classic optics I mentioned above might assist individuals in seeing further than mere reflections. At the end of this chapter I pointed toward some critical question we can ask of this structure. This is a start that classic structuralism might help us to achieve but which that system of thinking may not be able to move away from. It bears noting that many poststructural philosophers began their careers as structuralists, who upon taking a structuralist mind to certain limits arrived at the paradoxes actually constructed by Western dualisms of self and other, and body and mind among other things. They had, as I had after this structural narratology, a felt necessity to reach beyond this structure to find something more. Telling good stories meant reaching beyond the limits of the assumed structure in engagement. In particular in the last two sections of that chapter, I note how we must travel out from these stories, ideally encountering guides that might help disrupt some of the grinding dualisms of engagement in writing and practice. This is a beginning to what Deleuze might see as learning in the nomadic sense (Fendler, 2013).

Luckily I had a nomadic inclination and I was graced to know Jemila Sequeira as a guide. In Chapter Four I wrote a synopsis, a collective attempt at storying that involved a chorus of fourteen voices showing a very different story of engagement. In some ways it might be considered a borderland story. A number of individuals identified themselves outside of, or hesitant to enter, the third space. In stepping through the threshold of this story, it's striking to me how it disrupts the classic notion of self and other that traverses the center of many engagement narratives. This story for me, raises question for how our structured ideas of what engagement is, limit the possible stories we might be sharing in peer-reviewed spaces and otherwise. The stories I shared with these individuals also contained a relationally opaque notion of ethics that was lost in many academically verified stories.

I narrate the struggle to live this ethic through the writing class in Chapter Five. I find a notion of identity in academia, and in writing in particular to be ill suited to live out this ethic that I had yet to see as the poststructural ethic of not speaking for others. Chapters One, Three, Four, and Five, stories at the margins of more structured and institutionalized engagement then



come to fold back on top of the engagements storied in Chapter 2. The course of the dissertation reaches a temporary closure as I attempt to encircle all of these narratives and look through them for the partial images they are. I step through the rhizomatic threshold they collectively offer. Chapter Six is my attempt to relay to you what I see by bringing in two more stories of Prometheus and Epimetheus. That last chapter is an attempt to deconstruct the binary distinctions structured into dominant narratives of Promethean engagement.

In this appendix I've tried to take the story of Epimetheus in particular back toward a conversation in theory that attempts to do away with the dualism that such a story might relay on its surface. I try to frame Epimetheus in a theory beyond dualism—a perhaps Spiritual and poststructuralist sensibility. I've limited most of my hard academic theorizing to this appendix and Chapter 6, preferring instead to offer stories that were less academically verified or deconstructed. I left them raw in some ways to elicit some conversation and claim my inability and lack of desire to be authoritative upon a voice that isn't in many ways my own. I've attempted to show rather than tell, following a sense that my only role should be gratuitously presenting stories that offer thresholds for thinking beyond mere appearance. I was hopeful that encircling these stories might offer some sense of opacity around what engagement is and should be. I now sense that opacity forming the ethical strands that can run through engagement itself and I believe it does run through what I've come to call an Epimethean engagement. I've moved away from rules, save one, not speaking for others—a renunciation of the idea that I might save others from themselves. I acknowledge that this is something I cannot completely avoid as my being is rhizomatic and in relation to others that fill me. I take a certain stance that it's academic selves rather than others that might need to think of saving themselves. My only recourse is to learn more stories, become further known and unknown to myself, and practice gratuity and contrition throughout my speaking and hearing.

To me this all sounds well and good—closer to the humble truths that for the moment limit me. It might seem a stretch to bring this work into a question of validity. I'm reminded that failure to hold up “standards” in research can bring with it the juridical question Nietzsche

mentioned “Was it you?” Is validity just a means of accounting for oneself? Yes but no, validity should be a fertile obsession. “Validity is a ‘limit question’ of research, one that repeatedly resurfaces, one that can neither be avoided nor resolved, a fertile obsession given its intractability”(Lather, 2003, p. 674). In so far as my aim in much of this work is to decenter the structures of identity and the storied frame of engagement I’ve privileged a validity of transgression over a validity of correspondence(ibid., p. 675). Validity itself becomes a problematic in antifoundationalist work.

There are however a number of ways to think of this story work as valid. Paralogy is the refusal to grant closure on a subject—to introduce difference into a comfortable language game. Valid poststructural scholarship can then be seen as a creative act—rather than the “experts homology” scholarship seeks “the constant introduction of dissensus into consensus”(Fritzman, 1990, p. 372). In difference to homology, paralogy demands “knowledge of language games as such and the decision to assume responsibility for their rules and effects” (Lyotard 1984, p. 66 quoted in Lather, 2003, p. 679). In this way, highlighting the structure of language games at the center of engagement stories and disrupting binaries within them can make for “fruitful productions” in scholarship (ibid). It also highlights the choices in engagement and some of their (unintended) consequences—pointing out that leaning on our comfortable laurels is a deadly choice.

A rhizomatic validity is also apparent in story work as it creates “new conjunctural possibilities, produced by ongoing and transforming regimes of exclusion and inclusion”(Sandoval, 2000, p. 180). In opening up such gaps rhizomatic validity seeks to “work against the constraints of authority, regularity, and commonsense, and open thought up to creative construction”(Lather, 2003, p. 680). By exposing some gaps in the foundation of engagement stories—spaces and voices that many engagement stories erase or discount, the voices in this dissertation can create spaces for nurturing new growth. Lastly I think this particular dissertation touches on a notion of voluptuous validity in seeking to redress the phallogentric nature of Promethean intervention in many language games of engagement. A

return to Epimetheus is a return to the excess—"the revolution of voluptuousness, the physics of Venus chosen over that of Mars"(Serres, 1982, 101 quoted in Lather, 2003, p. 682). The dumping, the erasure of the effeminate brother—the spouse of Pandora, in favor of the heroic intervener was an important juncture in Westernized thought. The recovery of Epimethean gifts can bring some return to gratuitous acts and the hospitality that I believe story work in particular can offer. Patti Lather's "scandalous" checklist of transgressive validity suggests numerous avenues for pursuing further poststructural story work around this idea of engagement(ibid, p. 685-686).

It's through these practices in pushing the boundaries of knowledge and validity that I believe stories might be a particularly convivial art form of the possible. I believe firmly that the form and function of this dissertation, in trying to relate a story of inquiry, might be of use to others attempting to write about engagement amid this postmodern "crisis" or carnival of identity. I'm hesitant to suggest that this art form can be operationalized to secure or guarantee intended results. I don't want to offer story as process, to instrumentally produce learning, healing, dissertations, etc. I don't wish to package and commodify stories, or sell you a book on how to write them. I just see a goodness in gratuitously and freely giving them and receiving them in the spirit of openness and thanksgiving. But once again there are no guarantees. Stories that move beyond that claim can become manipulative tools. Systematically they can be used to channel crowds and limit independent thought—they can help teachers reach the Common Core rather than enable learning to question those limits.

#### *Epimethean storytelling as poststructuralist learning*

In difference to this manipulative use of story I'd like to finish this theoretical appendix by quickly narrating through, and with opaque bricks, a little of how I see the convivial art and tool of storytelling within my own learning. It's a multivocal attempt to share the hospitable spaces I've been a part of.

A story is a threshold one can cross through and imagine the possible. I've been present in story circles with John O'Neal, a founder of the Free Southern Theater—the cultural arm of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). I've shared stories with Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theater. I've seen plays both of these individuals have made from sharing stories among small groups—beautiful offerings—collective stories for more to hear. I've also been confronted by stories. I've been confronted with stories reflecting my own inhospitality and limits. I've kept those stories open—crossing through their thresholds in daily reflection. I've shared stories with students, and encouraged gratuitous writing around their lives. In these spaces of gratuitous storytelling I'm often surprised. I'm shaken. I'm stirred from my moorings. I find something that lets me step into and out from myself. This is a tool and space of free and limitless learning.

This gratuitous sharing of stories predates mandatory education. It predates Plato's Academy. It predates cultivation. After cultivation, stories were thought to have singular roots. Like trees they could cling defiantly to support their structure. Like vegetables, the new stories could be planted where you wanted them. The older stories are like grass, they grow from the middle and in every direction—sometimes especially where you don't want them. These stories, grasses, were the rhizomes understood best to nomads—those who defied cultivation. They were unhinged from the static roots of terra firma. These rhizomatic stories just were, all they could do was be scattered. Even inside the grand structures of our current era, these stories, nomadic grasses, find cracks in the foundation. I've been graced by a few of these stories that swept me up in relationships beyond any of my roots.

I came into this learning through a number of shocking stories. Maybe that's the way it has to happen—through a blade of grass that somehow breaks our foundation. I also think stories can slowly grow into us—repetitions of rhizomes at our edges. In some way I find a mix of stories both challenging and comforting are helpful amid my learning cycles of action and reflection. The stories that start this dissertation are perhaps more comfortable—you can identify more with one or the other—a few critical questions might spur some stories of your

own. Maybe you can come to see how these stories, or none of them, stack up to your experience. After a comforting entrance into questions maybe stories further afield can come to traverse your center. Perhaps that can leave you hungry and looking for more distant grasslands.

In the future of my education I'll be looking for places where these stories are growing into and out from one another—small circles, my neighborhood, a garden, a book club. Indeed I might defend small patches of earth where the wind can scatter and mix these grasses. The classroom can be a space like this. I've seen such stories grow there. We also have the theater and the radio, the storied image. I've found some importance in sharing stories one-to-one—being a bridge between stories that might be too vulnerable to fully share just yet. The opening of stories the presenting of thresholds has come to inform the way I write. In this dissertation I've tried to open doors and leave them open. I've left a number of them unfinished. The dissertation is an unfinished and imperfect threshold which I'll step through again tomorrow and the next day. In that way, the learning we can receive through stories is limitless. We can never unhear them while we keep breathing. I'm always struck by how abundant stories are even in their repetition. They remind me that no person is uninteresting—not while they still breathe. This new web of learning, this grassy plain—is a *conspiratio*—a conspiracy of the most awesome kind. I'm excited to take part.

## Appendix B: Inspirations

Below you'll find short biographies of my inspirations or muses throughout the text. They're of varying lengths and tone depending on my relationship with these individuals, what stories they have shared, and/or what information I could find. If you look through these sections online you'll see that I've curated a few websites and multimedia that may explain these individuals better, and in some instances in their own voices. There's no real reason for including these biographies other than being grateful and gratuitous. I felt since starting to write the dissertation that I should include something like this beyond the acknowledgements. Mine is a less-than-perfect effort, yet I hope this practice of being more curious about my mentors/inspirations/muses can bring some of their individuality to the fore as you read the dissertation.

At times, I've fancied that if I could wish five people around my dinner table, I would wish for these. They are in many ways different. I'd imagine Ivan and Mary would decide on the appropriateness of wine with dinner. But despite their differences I see in all of them the central and necessary goodness of being correlative to one another. It's in that spirit that I write these.

### *Mary Parker Follett*

I've read a number of biographical texts in the construction of this short piece. Chief among these is a biography written by Joan C. Tonn(2003) titled *Mary Parker Follett: Creating Democracy, Transforming Management*. At near 500 pages it's a compelling if intimidating read. If you're interested in exploring Mary Parker Follett's life and studies further you'd do well to read it.

Mary Parker Follett grew up in a rather tumultuous environment—a childhood that Tonn described as “rarely happy.” Her mother Elizabeth “Lizzie” Curtis Baxter was a descendant of Gregory Baxter who fled religious persecution in 1630 and helped found Boston.

Mary Parker Follett's maternal grandfather, Lizzie's father Daniel Baxter, was a wealthy merchant and storeowner in the area of Quincy. Lizzie was in quite a high social standing when she married Charles Allen Follett, the son of a blacksmith who had just returned from a less than exemplary four-year commitment in the Civil War. After the two were married Charles opened up a small news shop. He also began to support a drinking habit he had acquired in the army. His drinking and poor business practice resulted in the quick loss of his business and a return to his pre-war work as a machinist.

Around the same time, Charles' elder brother William, succumbed to the tuberculosis he had contracted in a Confederate prison camp. Charles was so struck by the news and his lack-luster situation that he left his job, his wife, and his three-year old daughter Mary Parker Follett. Lizzie was at a loss for how to provide for herself and her situation was rather embarrassing given her father's social status.

After a year of heavy drinking and odd jobs in Boston, Charles came back to his small family in Quincy. Soon after, the couple bore a second daughter, who lived only four months, dying quickly of cholera. Perhaps implicating his intemperance and the less than adequate living situation of his family, Charles again left his family in distress. He, rejoined his family soon thereafter in 1876 as a sober man. He had become involved with the Reform Club, one of many temperance organizations he would be involved in throughout the rest of his life.

Despite the dramas of her father, Tonn notes that Mary described him as a dedicated and deeply religious man, but saw her mother as a sort of villain, being "incompetent, demanding, and 'alien' to [her] interests" (ibid., p. 16). Tonn considers further, that "Mary seems to have reacted to the unpredictability of her father's behavior as children of alcoholics often do: she was forced to grow up quickly and had little contact with other children until adolescence" (ibid).

Around 1880, when Mary was eleven years old, she began to attend the private Thayer Academy. She had excelled in her early schooling, much to the pride of her now more stable father. By this time her family, along with her new brother George Dexter Follett had moved

into the large house of her grandfather on School Street. The aging Daniel Baxter was in want of a woman to run the family household after the death of Lizzie's mother in 1879.

At Thayer, Mary gained a reputation of academic excellence and she met a mentor of profound importance, Anna Boynton Thompson. Thompson ran the history and English curriculums the former of which she built around the "topical analysis" which confirmed and nurtured Mary's talent for defending a thesis and analyzing the ideas of others.

From there, in 1888, at the encouragement of Thompson, Mary was accepted into the Harvard Annex for Women—which later became Radcliffe College, Harvard's all-female coordinate. One course of note that she took was Albert Bushnell's Hart's "Topics in American History and Modern Constitutional History" which likely planted the seeds for Follett's first book *The Speaker of the House of Representatives*.

After the Harvard Annex, Mary spent one year at Newnham College in Cambridge, England. There as at the Annex "she could see how the accomplishments of women were belittled by those who wished to keep women in their place" (ibid., p. 53). But also at this residential college Mary came to learn something of how this small group of women could nurture community amid a space of relative freedom and good friendship—Newnham had a kind of hospitality that the Harvard Annex lacked.

She returned to the US and lived at her familial home, making a living for herself as a schoolteacher of history. She didn't enjoy it. The commute from Cambridge to Boston eventually wore on her and she, at the age twenty-six took up residence with the school's forty-six year old principal. This principal, Isobel Briggs, became her life's companion.

I'll fast forward here. Eventually in 1900 Follett, along with Briggs began working in the settlement house movement in and around Roxbury. This continued and solidified her work in community centers and neighborhood groups. Amid this work she involved herself in the Temperance Movement, and women's suffrage. She worked for eighteen years among the community centers and settlement houses of Boston before publishing her book, *The New State*. In it she cites and explains the particular efficacy of neighborhood groups in creating



democracy. She was so convinced of the central thesis of the book she said: "I [now] know what I would go to the stake for. That isn't either a joke or highfalutin. I mean it pretty literally. I have come to the certain conclusion which I am willing to give up everything for"(quoted in Tonn, 2003, p. 265).

After *The New State*, Follett continued her work in community movements and "integrative group" processes. Eventually she struck a collaboration with Eduard C. Lindemann, a tumultuous partnership, which culminated in 1924 with Follett's *Creative Experience* and Lindemann's *Social Discovery*.

Through the latter years of her life, Mary was quite unhealthy and she bore the loss of many family and friends, including Isobel Briggs her lifetime companion, with great sorrow. Toward the end of her career she was somewhat frustrated by the ill-sensibility some had in reading her works. At the time, scientific management and the idea of perfect conceptualization was drowning out some pragmatic notions of being in the world. In one telling moment, during a Harvard seminar, a student complained they could not account for all the factors that permeated a given situation Follett was hinting at. Follett responded:

*You just have to do the best you can...I think what I rather object to is this, that I have not sat and read books on philosophy and decided that the deepest fundamental principles of the universe were [these]...I have simply, for about 25 years, been watching boards and groups and have decided from that watching...And it seems to me that you are supposing that I begin the other way around. In my experience this is what happens when you have fruitful results. I am giving my experience. I am not giving philosophy out of a book.*

From this and other moments it seemed some of her ideas fell outside the *zeitgeist* of her time. Her approach to method, her gender, and the inhospitality of the political climate following the Great Depression and World War II resulted in her voice falling into relative obscurity after her death from cancer in 1933. Yet her work presaged much of the thinking in the 1980s and 1990s

around popular management and the social psychology of groups and organizations. Since that time her work has gathered a small following.

I, for one, am indebted to her work. Follett's steadfast and frank discussion regarding the goodness of groups—her curiosity about how co-creation, interdependent sovereignty, and friendship create democracy—for me, affirms the Epimethean sensibility of engagement.

### *Jemila Sequeira*

I met Jemila through the Food Dignity grant that began in the spring and summer of 2011. Our first real meeting was quite eventful as you can see in Chapter Five. In the space of thirty minutes or so with Jemila, I began to learn quite a bit more about myself. Over the past four years, Jemila and I have come to know one another more and I hope our friendship will last long after I leave Ithaca. I'm quite indebted to her hospitality.

Jemila grew up along the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, New York. Her mother was from the Deep South and her father was from Singapore, Malaysia. Growing up she said, "I remember hearing my father speaking Chinese to the men in the living room—I heard my mother in the kitchen." She grew up in a third-space—not only at home but also at school. At Edward R. Murrow High School in Midwood, Brooklyn she attended school among a largely Jewish upper-class population—walking back to the Gowanus projects every afternoon. She excelled in school and became somewhat of an outcast in her home community. She mentioned in high school she always gravitated toward people that might be odd or feel uncomfortable around all the others.

Upon graduating high school in 1978 Jemila left home and despite little encouragement from her teachers to apply for top tiered schools she attended Cornell University. She began working in community organizations throughout Ithaca for a number of years. A college advisor gave her a copy of Cornel West's book *Race Matters* that piqued her interest and started her line of critical thinking. She opened a massage business, where she found a gift for healing. Later Jemila developed fibromyalgia that limited her ability to practice so she returned to

school. She completed her degrees and went on to earn a MSW from SUNY Stony Brook—graduating at the top of the class.

She moved back home and began working in hospitals as a social worker. “Woodhull, Inwood, Bushwick Brooklyn—every other bed had a policeman.” She had the “white coat” ticket. Being back home was tough. She eventually moved back to Ithaca working in various civil service positions. Meanwhile her brother developed diabetes and began discussing issues of food justice in Brooklyn and began growing some of his own food. Sadly he later died from health complications. Jemila had met Christine Porter in Ithaca and the two began discussing food justice work, particularly around childhood obesity in the area. Jemila was eventually hired as the Director of the Whole Community Project (WCP). She refocused the effort on food sovereignty and community-led food initiatives. In 2011 she became the lead organizer for the Food Dignity project in Tompkins County.

She is a co-founder of Congo-Square Market and through this organization and the WCP has planned numerous events discussing racial justice and food sovereignty in the local Tompkins County community. To support the need for a food policy council she’s led numerous trips to Detroit Michigan where Tompkins County leaders have seen the necessity of food organizing in low-income communities and in communities of color. Currently she is supporting community-led projects in community gardening, produce marketing, produce production, and audio-visual media around the food system.

In knowing Jemila for the past four years I’ve come to know more about myself than I ever have. Her work with students in Tompkins County, including her help with the writing class, her speaking at various engagements, and the more speakers she’s brought to our small community has been a great learning experience for me. Her work with me in crafting the research project that forms Chapter Four was without a doubt the highlight of my past six years in Ithaca. Of all the people in Tompkins County, I’m indebted to her the most. I’m happy that she took a chance on me and started a path of learning that I’ll likely never finish.

I met Scott as a participant in a class he taught called: Community Education and Development. I had just come back from a rather *kairotic* experience in Niger where I was bouncing in the back of a Land-Rover, reading the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* while oppressing people with my research. His class, a conversation amid students experiences and a half-dozen books allowed me the opportunity to begin telling stories about my life and reflecting on them in the contexts of community education and organizing. I talked about my relationship with my father, my experiences in Niger and Morocco, and my growing uneasiness in my program of International Agriculture and Rural Development. How I came to be involved in the Food Dignity work was quite a story. Over the past five years, I've come to know a little more about Scott as he's undoubtedly learned some things about me.

He grew up in the small town of Watseka Illinois, the youngest of four. His father and mother met as the result of a shared tragedy. His father had been dating Scott's maternal aunt when she died of scarlet fever. His father, after this aunt's death, corresponded with Scott's mother through letters and the two were eventually married. Scott's father was stationed in California during World War II but later the couple settled in Illinois. Scott would admit that he grew up in a rather normal place—small town white Americana, the Garrison Keillor kind of town where anything different was kept rather under the surface. Scott's deviation from the “normal” track came under the influence of two brothers of close friends who where in a band. These brothers seemed in love with being odd—lovers of Monty Python, poetry, and esoteric music—misfits of sorts. Scott through their influence, began reading some existentialist writers and fell in love with music.

After high school, Scott attended the University of Illinois, because, as he said “that's what you do when you can.” He enrolled in electrical engineering. That study didn't really pique his interest—in that way I guess both Scott and I had similar transitions into college life. For some reason or another he found himself moving to a program in education. In one of his classes, a man named Peter Rothblatt roller-skated into class. Peter would ask the professor

critical questions, challenging claims made by readings or educational dogma. Scott got to know Peter who gave him a copy of Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. Peter Rothblatt was the agitator that Scott credits with starting his political life.

Shortly after meeting Peter, Scott became a coordinator at the Common Ground Coop in Urbana-Champaign. This hub served as a space for having conversations about the anti-apartheid movement, and the Central American solidarity movement. Scott met his first wife there. The hub was located in the Illinois Disciples Foundation basement on the University of Illinois campus—the minister there, Jim Hollaman from Hot Springs, Arkansas was basically a “radical, atheist, Marxist.” The hub served as a focus of activism in Champaign-Urbana.

At the same time Scott played lead guitar in a band called Crayon Rubbings. After graduating from college he and the band went to Denver in 1983 to record an album in the studio of one of the misfit brothers from Scott's earlier youth, Bob. Records were pressed and the bassist hand-drew each of the album covers. The band continued to write music and Scott continued to be more involved with the Coop. He recounts that his other life, the life he could have easily chosen, was pursuing his passion for creating music with his friends. Yet for various reasons the band disbanded.

Scott began to be more involved with the University YMCA which held Friday forums and supported various political activities. Scott was eventually asked what he'd like to work on and was basically allowed to write his own job description. He ended up working there for ten years. This YMCA is considered one of the oldest community-university partnerships in the United States. During this time he witnessed the power of grassroots organizing to sustain community initiative and combat institutional bigotry. During his tenure at the University YMCA he helped found a grassroots movement combatting the University's appropriated mascot, Chief Illiniweck. Overall, Scott's experience at in Champaign-Urbana was a radicalizing time for him. But his position within the YMCA grew to be too comfortable—it started to feel less challenging. He had also grown disaffected by the rise of leftist identity politics, which often left actors like himself out of the picture.

He moved to Minneapolis with his first wife who took a faculty position at . Scott tried his hand at being a writer. The first gulf war started and Scott worked with the Minnesota Peace and Justice Coalition. He left Minnesota for a year and went back to YMCA. Mike Doyle was at the time the director of the Champaign County Healthcare Consumers, and they were doing community organizing work, not activism. He introduced Scott to the work of organizing that spurred some reading. One book of note was Saul Alinsky's *Call Me Rebel* which spoke to some of Scott's frustration with identity-based movements and protests politics. It also bolstered his desire to do organizing work, and to do that kind of writing. Harry Boyte's name was mentioned in this book. He eventually moved away from the University YMCA and returned to Minneapolis—asking Harry Boyte if he could work with him. Harry agreed but could only support Scott's work if he was a student.

Scott's question was centered around the land-grant system and democracy. Having worked in a community-campus partnership for ten years he often heard people speak fondly of this land-grant system but no one could really tell him what that system was all about. Scott worked with Harry's Project Public Life—a partnership-based project involving a hospital, a college, the business community and the University of Minnesota's extension system. That was the first time Scott had ever done anything with extension. That whole project was trying to bring in organizing concepts into these institutions. In the middle of this project Scott began looking deeper into the history of the extension system where he found a certain prophetic narrative of the land-grant system. Scott found women and men within the extension system that no one in the extension system knew anything about. These prophets were left out of extension's institutional histories. He says he "became a historian out of urgent necessity...It's dangerous when people lose their story or forget their story or have a bad story." Extension it seemed had and has a certain comic book story about itself. Through his historical research and critique, Scott developed his interest in the traditions of democratic populism that informed a strand within the early establishment of the land-grant colleges and extension.

Because Liberty Hyde Bailey was at the center of his work, Scott was drawn to Cornell to study his papers in the archive. He had also attended a conference on extension and public work where he met Bill Lacey and David Pelletier. Bill invited Scott to come speak at Cornell for two years in a row. During this time he met Paul Bonaparte Crowe, the director of Tompkins County Cooperative Extension called him up and said that there was a job he needed to apply for. Paul was on the search committee. Scott applied for the job and he got it.

It was in Ithaca, two days after 9/11 that Scott met his second wife Donna Lupardo, in a meeting of the Youth Community Action Task Force held through Cornell Cooperative Extension. At the time she was the Education Director for the Broome County Mental Health Association. They struck up conversations and with time were eventually married. Donna is currently a New York State Assemblywoman for the 123rd District that includes Binghamton New York. Scott has spent the past years working around the histories of the land-grant spirit of American higher education while collecting practitioner profiles of community organizers and civic professionals. He's currently the Co-Director of Imagining America—Artists and Scholars in Public Life where he has supported, among other things, national discussions on the past, present, and future of extension's role in public life.

On a personal note, Scott has been and continues to be an inspiration to me. He seems to have an unwavering ability to listen and be curious about people. His talents show in the way he builds a classroom. I remember in our Community Education and Development class, us students eventually took over the format. We were welcomed to do so. His skill at holding spaces, using his quite convivial tools, allowed us to find little bits of ourselves—our passions. We were encouraged to let those take hold and bring us to new places. He exemplifies the spadework and leadership of Ella Baker, finding ways he can support others that are doing the work. His example in teaching, taking part, and giving part of himself has been the most welcome sight amid an institution that at times has been rather hard for me to bear.

As I've said of him to others, Scott continues to be, a most insightful teacher, a trusted mentor, an energizing scholar, and a dear friend. He, more than any other individual at Cornell, has restored my faith in the ability of scholars as citizens to do good work.

### *Ivan Illich*

Born on September 4th, 1926 and growing up in Vienna, Ivan Illich began his life among the aristocracy. His mother Ellen was a German whose family had converted from Judaism to Catholicism. His father Piero, along with his mother introduced Illich at an early age to the work of liberal intellectuals including Rudolf Steiner. At a very early age Illich was fluent in German, French, and Italian—he was also fluent in Croatian since he spent time at his paternal grandparents estate. Illich was classified as half-Aryan during World War II but when his father died his family was forced to flee to Italy where he attended school, cared for his mother and twin brothers, and joined the resistance. Being fluent in German “he managed to wheedle information from the German officers. In one case he learned of German plans to remove livestock from Italy as they withdrew. He then moved as many cows as possible into the mountains, where they could be hidden and saved. ‘It wasn’t tremendously heroic activity,’ he said, ‘but since then I have been rooted on the outside. Resistance comes natural’” (Hartch, 2014, sec. The Man).

He joined the Catholic priesthood following the war. While living at the prestigious Colegio Capranica he wrote on theologian Romano Guardini and studied the writings of Thomas Aquinas informally with Jacques Maritain. He was ordained in 1951 (ibid). He eschewed an opportunity to be a church diplomat and instead came to Princeton, earning a second doctorate with Albertus Magnus. Later, he was taken in by the Puerto Rican community as a parish priest in Washington Heights, New York City. As one biography noted, “the experience of tending to immigrant parishioners as they got flash-fried in urban modernity left a lasting impression of the grotesque inadequacy of large-scale, rationally administrated institutions in dealing with basic human needs” (Madar, 2010).



He eventually became the vice-rector of Pontifical Catholic University in Ponce, Puerto Rico in the fall of 1956(Hartch, 2014, sec. The Man). While in Puerto Rico, Illich became quite frustrated with the Vatican's silence about the bomb and birth control. He was quite vocal about these issues and subsequently lost support among bishops in Puerto Rico and moved to Cuernavaca Mexico—running the Center of Intercultural Formation, a missionary training center. In 1967 he wrote an article titled “The Seamy Side of Charity,” that was a sharp attack on the Vatican's push to send missionaries and Occidental clergy to Latin America. He was summoned to the Vatican in 1968. He decided to “leave the active priesthood and to devote himself to social criticism throughout the 1970s”(ibid).

In collaboration with a number of similarly minded individuals, including Everett Reimer, Illich founded CIDOC, the Center for Intercultural Documentation that served as both a language school and a hub for critical thinking and coursework around Westernized institutions. From this center he hoped to document the rise of Western modes of development within the so-called Third World. Issuing quarterly essays through CIDOC, Illich and others refined their critiques of the modernization of poverty within areas such as energy, healthcare, schooling, industry, gender, and organized religion. In 1976 Illich was summoned to the Vatican amid stirrings of a report by the CIA. Eventually, fearing the institutionalization of CIDOC and the flood of intellectualism it had begun, he in conversation with other members shut the organization down(“Ivan Illich,” n.d.). He became a “peripatetic professor” moving between institutions like Penn State and eventually the University at Bremen while maintaining a home in Cuernavaca as well.

Subsequent to Illich's writing of *Celebration of Awareness*(1970), *Deschooling Society*(1971), *Tools for Conviviality*(1973), *Energy and Equity*(1974), *Medical Nemesis*(1976), *The Right to Useful Unemployment*(1978a), *Toward a History of Needs*(1978b), *Shadow Work*(1981), and *Gender*(1982), Illich turned his interest to a history of the senses and eventually a focus on the need for hospitality and friendship. By this time he was fluent in his “native” German, Italian, French, and Croatian as well as Greek, Latin, Spanish, English, and

Hindi(Paquot, 2003). Twenty years before his death he began to notice a tumor on his face. Any operation might interfere with his brain function and in particular his ability to speak. In spite of continued pain throughout his life he decided against operating, solemnly referring to his tumor as “my mortality”(ibid). He died among his friends in Bremen, Germany on December 2nd, 2002. His copious scholarship, a refutation of institutional pastoralism, has been largely silenced in academic circles by what can be considered an “intellectual exclusion”(Gabbard, 1991, 1993).

### *Ben Okri*

Born to an Igbo mother, and an Urhobo father in northern Nigeria, Ben Okri like many of the individuals in this appendix grew up in an in-between-ness. His father, Silver Okri, soon moved to London to study law where Ben began primary school. But, Ben quickly returned home to his family at the age of seven. His father later returned to Nigeria practicing law on behalf of those that could not afford the legal fees. Nigeria at the time was embroiled in the Biafran War, a political and ethnic conflict resulting in up to three million civilian casualties. During this time Ben was taken in and out of many schools—receiving a great deal of his education at home, among the stories of his mother Grace.

Ben applied for admission to a university physics program at the age of 14—he was rejected. After finishing high school he was a clerk at a paint store and an avid writer. His political writings were not published but he found avenues for his short stories. He completed his first novel at the age of 19. He moved to England on a grant from the Nigerian government to study comparative literature at Essex University but was eventually forced to leave for lack of continued funds. He became homeless—his writing accelerated. His written pieces transitioned from realism to the mythic and poetic narrative forms he’s become known for. In 1991, Okri’s book *The Famished Road* won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Over his thirty-five year career Ben Okri has remained a strong voice among postcolonial and postmodern writers among such peers as Salman Rushdie and Gabriel García

Márquez. For my own work, I find inspiration in Okri's commitment to creating new narrative voices. Tied to this practice is his firm opinion that changing the stories we tell, or can tell, is central to realizing our world—and recreating it. Schooled through the stories of his mother Okri knew that a story “brings the question: what is reality?” From there Okri claims,

*“Everyone's reality is different. For different perceptions of reality we need a different language. We like to think that the world is rational and precise and exactly how we see it, but something erupts in our reality which makes us sense that there's more to the fabric of life. I'm fascinated by the mysterious element that runs through our lives. Everyone is looking out of the world through their emotion and history. Nobody has an absolute reality”(quoted in Sethi, 2011)*

If you go to the dissertation's website you can see him express himself in his own words much better than I can relate here. Suffice to say, his life's work,

*“has been to try to catch, all at once, as many levels of the mysterious and beautiful elements that make us human—as well as the tragic things. I'm always pursuing newer ways of telling stories, because a story is not a beginning, a middle, and an end. A story is much richer than that...This earth that we're living is full of stories, in the same way that for a fish the ocean is just full of ocean...there are invisible stories and there are visible ones. I'm fascinated by invisible stories. I think maybe the purpose of what we try to do in art, finally, is to enchant the human heart and the human mind into a sense of its true kingdom—of its magnificence. And so, my writing is not really about what you're reading on the page. The writing is intended to take you somewhere. It's what it does to you in the taking you somewhere that it's about...That journey is the point. Ideally I'd like my readers to both not finish my books and to finish them. If you can manage those two things at the same time, you'll get the exact spirit to which I write” (Ebury Reads, 2007).*

Ben Okri, remains an inspiration to me as I write this dissertation. Through him I see a truth that changing the stories we normally hear is a creative and life-affirming art. The good life depends on our ability to tell new stories.

## Appendix C: A Story-Based & Meta-Interpretive Cartography

In this appendix I've outlined the method used to construct the individual engagement narratives you see in Chapter Two. This appendix, in addition to the following appendices, adds clarity around the particular drive, values, and methods I considered in creating a narrative topography of engagement.

### *The taxonomic drive*

Humans and, perhaps in particular, academically situated humans have a fascination with classifying things. It's helpful—but it can also be quite dangerous. As we come to understand the world as much larger than our ability to process it—we find comfort in classifying various aspects of our environment. Classifying helps us find and maybe understand our place in the world—it can also help us manipulate and control it in certain ways. Unsurprisingly, we find the practice of naming different things to be quite prevalent in the creation stories of many religions—especially those creation stories that position the cosmos as being created either from nothing (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), or from chaos (Greek mythology).

We can also find a hint of our current age's taxonomic drive emerging from the chaos of late 16th and early 17th century Europe, which many scholars cite as the dawn of the modern era. Along with the Cartesian and Scientific Revolutions there was, and continues to be, a steady effort to recatalog the cosmos through increasingly scientific means. Though one fact we should acknowledge at the outset of a discussion around the taxonomic drive is that people can and do catalog the world in very different ways.

Again, Foucault, points this out in *The Order of Things*. In speaking to us westerners, largely precipitant of the modern era, Foucault implies we are accustomed to viewing the world through spectrums, continuums, or phylogenetic trees—and furthermore these typologies hold a logic we feel comfortable with. To disrupt this convention he prefaces his book by describing his reading of a passage in Borges. The section details a perhaps-fictitious taxonomy in a Chinese encyclopedia wherein:

*animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies(quoted in Foucault, 1970, p. xvi).*

Foucault notes that "out of the laughter that shattered, as [he] read the passage" eventually came his realization—that "in the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*"(ibid). After the initial wonder and possibilities of such a realization we can start by noting that 1) there many are different ways of classifying things, ideas, and people, and 2) there is great power (and potentially many types of power) involved in how we decide to go about that task.

In attempting to write my own taxonomy (which I'm naming a topography for reasons I'll explain later), I'm conscious of the ethical responsibilities that come with my practice. There's no clear-cut out-of-the box method that I can justifiably lean on in resolving an ethical quandary like this. In approaching the archive of engagement I must make decisions about *how* to order things, *how* to explore difference, and *how* to give difference fair play. The choices I make in this research and text can and should be questioned in reference to the historical moment, the balance of multiple accountabilities, and also my own thinking and feelings.

To help frame my decisions a little more thoroughly I've researched over a dozen typologies that are pertinent to engagement and I've included them as an appendix to this text. Each of the typologists I've detailed made their own decisions, whether explicit or not, as to how and why they ordered or framed their typology in a certain way. I've amply discussed my praise and concern of these typologies in the appendix and I won't repeat myself here. Rather there are a few things I'll note about these typologies in general that stand opposed to my intended values and encourage me to try something different.

#### *Intended values of this project*

Numerous scholars and activists have created typologies, rooted in personal experience, political theory, and participant voice that are pertinent to engagement (Arnstein, 1969; Barker, 2006; Burgess & Chilvers, 2006; Connor, 1988; Davidson, 1998; Horst, 2013; N. J. Marks, 2008; N. Marks, 2013; Morton, 1995; Rocha, 1997; Rowe & Frewer, 2005; Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2004; Taylor, 2002). These typologies range from disciplines such as planning (Arnstein, 1969; Davidson, 1998), science and technology studies (Marks, 2013; Rowe & Frewer, 2005), and public administration (Connor, 1988). Others deal with particular facets of engaged practice like service learning (Morton, 1995) or science communication (Horst, 2013).

These typologies are a subset of a still larger genre within the scholarship of engagement seeking to add some clarity to best practices, evaluative criteria, and general theory of engagement. Burgess and Chilvers (2006, pp. 722–733), as pointed out by Marks (2013, p. 38), posit that claims in this larger genre are typically resultant from one of three different sources: the opinions and experience of the researcher/practitioner themselves (as in Arnstein, 1969; Rowe & Frewer, 2005), theoretical and normative understandings of politics (as in Barker, 2006), or the opinions of project participants (as in Arnstein, 1972; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008). For my particular work, these typologies arouse some concerns for clarity, usability, and flexibility, which I believe my research can address. I'll explain.

My concern for clarity, and when I say clarity I'm referring to clarity or transparency of method, is perhaps the most traditionally academic of my concerns and consequently this concern has been raised most often by academics (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Corbin-Staton, 2009; Weed, 2005). Typologies suffer from many of the same critiques as literature reviews. They are more often than not a justification for a particular view of "the problem". As noted by Weed (2008) "researchers use literature reviews as context-setting exercises and often present such reviews as arguments for a particular point of view, or as justification for particular research" (p. 15).

For some (Wolf, 1986; Wood, 2000 as cited in Weed, 2008) this brand of subjectivity inherent in literature reviews must be expunged by quantitative meta-analysis or systematic reviews that assume more positivist epistemologies. However as other researchers have noted, this tendency to quantify the findings of interpreted phenomena, such as engagement case studies, erases the contextual nature of human activity and representation (Noblit & Hare, 1988). In short, a positivist approach to synthesis across studies in a search for *the* truth is inappropriate for interpretivist epistemology and the search for truths in context. A few research synthesis methodologies have been developed that remain true to interpretivist epistemology and directly address the concern for typologies only representing the perspective of the researcher (Corbin-Staton, 2009; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Weed, 2005, 2008). I'll explain these developments further in the section titled "Developing a story-based and meta-interpretive cartography," which will respond not only to my concerns for clarity, but also usability and flexibility.

My chief concern in reference to typologies is that they are useful. Much like a map or a dichotomous key may play a role in useful understandings of nature, I believe a typology of engagement should be useful to multiple parties wanting to navigate the third space between communities and public institutions. A typology like Sherry Arnstein's (1969) often-cited *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, although lacking "academic" rigor, was quite useful for communities and agencies grappling with their interpretations of citizen participation. It exists as the most cited



and downloaded article of the Journal of the American Institute of Planners largely, in my opinion, because it usefully invited conversation from multiple vantages. I doubt my own typology's terrain will resemble Arnstein's vertical topography but I will strive for a similar level of usability.

To achieve this goal I'll keep a mind to other's ability to converse with my conclusions from various academic fields and non-campus-affiliated walks of life. The storied medium is exemplary for addressing this concern with broad based discussion as I believe Scott Peters(2007, 2010, 2013) has found in his work on the public purposes of higher education. Understanding and responding to engagement stories and their implications for daily life does not require direct experience, theoretical knowledge, or onerous methodologies, though all of these may contribute in some way to broad discussion. Stories can also remain accountable to multiple perspectives—opening up opportunities for mutual sentiment as well as vigorous debate over difference. With a mind to usability throughout the third space of engagement, I'll intend to build a storied cartography into both my method and my presented style and tone.

Lastly, my third area of concern is flexibility. Aided by a transparency of method and usability from multiple vantages I hope to create a topography that can be reinterpreted and added to. I build this concern into my process for two large reasons. First, I give no assurance that this topography is the right way to categorize various practices in engagement nor that I've accounted for all the nuance and variations extant in the literature. While I strive to make this typology as comprehensive as useful, the act of interpretation is inherently prone to perspective and some lack of peripheral vision. I hope that my above concern for usability that generates dialogue can help remedy some misinterpretation and oversight as you approach this chapter.

Secondly, culturally extant explanations of what happens in engagement undervalue the goings on in what David Mathews(2009) calls the "wetlands of democracy" (p. 7). Mathews notes we can see politics operating on two levels. We're used to seeing politics operating at the institutional level but often fail to recognize politics operating at the roots of society at ad hoc or ad lib meetings, street corners, and other informal gatherings. I would add we also tend to miss

the more extra-institutional or trans-institutional efforts whose stories meander between any clear political or academic theory. I'm wagering that much of the activity in engagement is nurtured and practiced in this space, some of which is described in the literature in the form of case studies, others of which have not, should not, or cannot be documented in such manner. New practices, new stories, and new theories are constantly growing in these wetlands of engagement. I'm intent on producing a topography that is continuously attentive to and welcoming of these new stories, while also being cognizant of their ecology. Creating a flexible typology one can both contest and add to, will be key to the durability of this effort in my own and hopefully others' thinking and practice.

Addressing the above three concerns for clarity, usability, and flexibility will set my effort in this paper apart from existing typologies pertinent to engagement. Being attentive to these three concerns will also require some inventive methodology that will prove a challenge in researching, writing, and publishing the piece. In the section below I'll assuage some fears of my own and perhaps yours by attending to more of the brass tack issues around clear research goals and questions before moving on to sections on method.

#### *Inscribing particular stories for interpretation*

In order to access "thousands" of engagement case stories I've gleaned peer-reviewed literature that self-identifies with the topic. In practice this has involved an extensive, though not exhaustive, search of the literature wherein a language of engagement is prominent. Oftentimes "engagement" is found in the title of the article, its abstract, or the academic purpose of a particular journal or special issue. Overall, I've amassed more than 2,000 articles from across the literature ranging from disciplines as disparate as nanotechnology and K-12 education.

Special consideration has been given to a number of journals in the emerging field of engagement including, the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*,

the *Journal for Civic Commitment*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, as well as the *Public Understanding of Science*. Additionally several journals have had special editions pertinent to engagement, particularly; *New Directions for Higher Education* (Winter 2010), the *Journal of Public Affairs* (January 2002), the *American Sociologist* (September 2007), the *South African Review of Sociology* (June 2012), and *Science and Engineering Ethics* (December 2011) which have been included in the original data set in their totality.

Regardless of special focus on the above journals and issues, there is a substantial amount of literature being presented in other, less recognized, venues that contribute to the academic archive of engagement. I set up a Google alert for various forms of engagement discourse that returned over a dozen entries per week from a variety of venues including, in March 2014 for example, *Government Information Quarterly*, the *Journal of Environmental Management*, the *Journal of Participatory Medicine*, and the *American Journal of Community Psychology* among others.

I acknowledge that the collection built above only represents a portion of the engagement archive, but I believe this particular portion is rather exemplary of engagement discourses coming through large (I could also say dominant or hegemonic) socio-cultural institutions of academia, government, non-profits, and advocacy groups. Admittedly it is not a very viable way to understand engagement stories coming from the so-called wetlands of democracy--we'll get to that later.

Still and all, this preliminary sampling method has proven ideal for gleaning engagement discourse across the breadth of its meaning and practice as presented in institutionally sanctioned literature. The sampling method here is not comprehensive as in positivist meta-analysis and systematic review, but rather based on maximum variation sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 233). I didn't intend to interpret all of these articles, but rather represent the diversity and difference of engagement stories.

To do so more effectively, I further narrowed the literature by looking for particularly full and descriptive case studies. This pool of data included around 500 individual articles. I've

appended an audit trail of choices I've made throughout the sampling that further inscribes criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Now, the question remains, how do I interpret individual stories in the archive with an eye to similarity and difference?

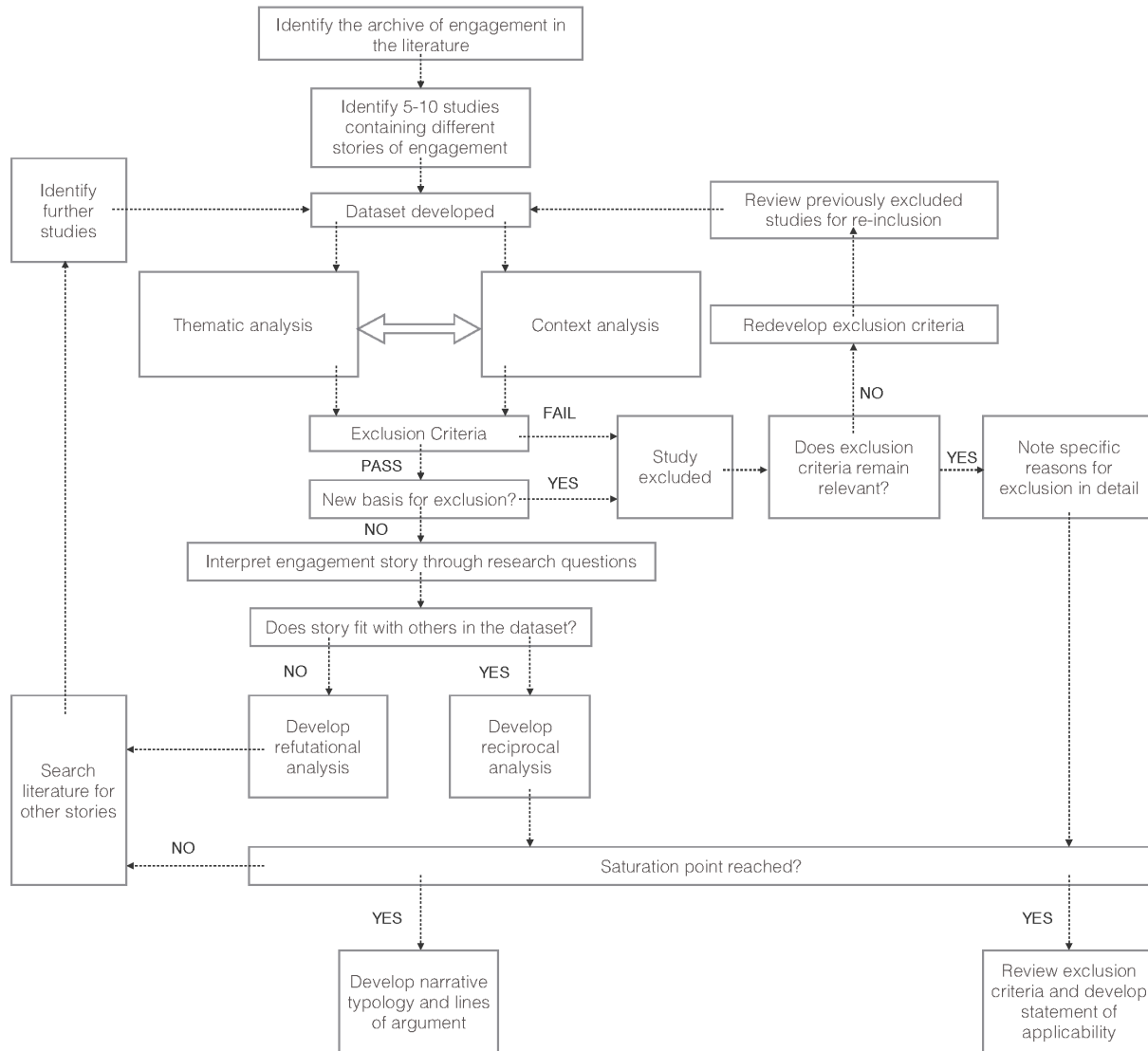
#### *Steps for an iterative interpretation of engagement*

The method of interpretation I've used in this study bears resemblance to at least three other methods that enjoy some popular application. First, and perhaps most influential in terms of conceptual framework, is thematic narrative analysis wherein I focus particularly on "what" is being said in the literature rather than why, how, or to/by whom. The centrality of narrative in this entire dissertation warrants further explanation that I've provided in a large appendix to the text. However, more specifically in regard to this particular paper it bears noting that the method I describe below establishes trends across separate cases and builds interpretation that doesn't necessarily lean on prior theory. On both these latter counts my method differs from the thematic narrative analysis discussed in Riessman(2008, pp. 53–76). Once again, for a more thorough treatment of narrative theory and method please visit the appendix.

Secondly, in my effort to synthesize across articles I'm leaning on concepts gleaned from meta-ethnography(Noblit & Hare, 1988). Noblit and Hare devised three distinct methods for grouping across studies. First is a method of interpreting concepts or stories into one another, whereby one might eventually reach an overarching metaphor, or story that usefully interprets a larger group of studies. Practically this is akin to asking if, and identifying how, separate articles are in some way participating in or telling the same story. Noblit and Hare call this *reciprocal translation analysis*. In contrast, where stories differ, I bring in a second concept of *refutational synthesis* where conflicts, differences, and inconsistencies are explored between studies. Practically this involves exploring the question of how articles are telling largely different stories of engagement. Lastly are inquiries on *lines-of-argument* that attempt to discuss the whole of stories found. Practically, this method asks questions pertinent to the larger archive of engagement and how it's disciplined in the literature.

Third, with a focus on process, I'm leaning on Mike Weed's (2005, 2008) framework for meta-interpretation which involves an iterative approach and accompanying audit trail of choices I make along the synthesis. Taken together with insights from the literature and intellectual, practical, and personal goals I have for this work, the process of analysis is described as follows. First I bracketed the specific archive that I'm interested in studying. Next, with an eye to achieve maximum variation within the sample, I selected several articles that represent highly contrasting stories of engagement. Third, I analyzed each article particularly focusing on what is being said in reference to the twelve facets of an engagement story. Here I referred to questions about identity, world concept, and engagement process outlined for the research in the section above. I then distilled what is being said into a certain engagement story being performed in the article.

At the end of this phase I had several different stories of engagement from the initial articles. I then focused on purposeful sampling of articles to fill out a broader range of stories that were missing from the initial set. Here and throughout the rest of the analysis of individual articles I began to use meta-ethnography's three approaches to inquiry by asking whether a particular article fits into a story I had already interpreted from the literature, conversely if it did not, what separated it from others and how might I story it, and lastly what does this article tell me about the whole of the engagement archive. From this point on I churned through articles looking for saturation in terms of different kinds of stories, as well as a conclusion that within the various narrative themes I was finding very little new information about what engagement is. I've represented the process in the flowchart below.



**Figure 4: Flowchart of interpretive process adapted from Weed (2005)**

To summarize the above, I previously mentioned Francesca Polletta's (2006) claim that we can trace the careers of stories. She goes on to note that through such process we can expose "not only the political processes by which they come to be tellable or authoritative but also the dynamics by which newly legitimated stories produce new modes of action and new terrains of contention. This should help to identify the structural conditions in which culture has independent force in defining new interests and identities" (ibid, p. 7). Illuminating these common threads of different stories is useful as a retrospective interpretation of past efforts at

engagement. However this interpretation does have a prospective application in shaping future engagement stories that implicitly or explicitly place themselves outside of past trends. I've hinted at some of these prospective possibilities after presenting individual storylines. There I discuss lines of argument that are common and uncommon to engagement stories.

In closing, it's worth pointing out that this effort to highlight different stories in a given cultural archive is not new. It's akin to Scott Peters' efforts at describing different storylines of higher education's public purpose in general (Peters, 2007, 2010) and his more specific work around the land grant system (Peters, 2013). My effort also bears some resemblance to the book *Love is a Story* by the renowned psychologist Robert Sternberg (1998). However my method for building these different storylines of engagement focuses on current developments and articles rather than psychological or historical treatments of "engagement." It does not involve personal practice narratives or quantified subject interviews. Admittedly the methods I've described above require a certain level of innovation in practice and most definitely so in my case of marrying each tradition together in the broad concept of narrative. However my interpretive method seeks to be a bit more iterative, emergent, and methodical, to assuage some concerns with validity that previously cited authors have noted about literature reviews in general and those that seek to develop typologies in particular.

#### *Some caveats*

I've tried to develop a method that illuminates the many different stories of engagement present in peer-reviewed literature. I've described my rationale and values, and how I intend to go about doing it, and now I need to tell you how my effort has some real limits. They're acceptable in my view but you may differ.

Here's a first limit. I'm bringing a narrative interpretation to peer-reviewed authors who often don't consider themselves storytellers. Indeed, peer-reviewed articles aren't stories necessarily—even case studies aren't stories to some degree. Their syntactic structure is often more reminiscent of description or explanation than it is to narration. For instance, these authors

may not often include what storytellers call perceptive language--elements that narrate what it feels like to be in a certain situation. This presents some challenges and limits to this work.

I've attempted to pull storied elements out of texts that don't read like stories in the first place. Admittedly, I'm interpreting these articles by a set of standards they don't necessarily hold for themselves. I'm also interpreting them from a perspective that they might not have intended to speak to. To some degree this is like eavesdropping into a conversation to which you weren't invited, but that in and of itself raises some profound questions for articles describing an intent to engage the public. For instance, in some discussions I'll have with the stories below, I point out how authors position "other" publics in certain ways, or how they don't include certain parts of "normal" stories, like a moral for instance.

A justifiable defense of these positioning acts, and the lack of a storied frame is quite simply that academics talk this way, and not that way. I can, and should be critiqued for judging a piece of writing by a standard that doesn't match with its own "situatedness," or occasion for telling. Admittedly, many of the authors would have spoken differently about their work if they were speaking to a different audience than those catered to by a particular journal. This is problematic, yes, but for me it's also telling.

It foregrounds the politics and daily practice of academic writing in a genre that should be very attentive to that dynamic. The storied frame and critique begs the need for certain normative questions. For example, in community engagement, who is the audience, or further still who is the "peer" in peer-reviewed? Who should it be? Is there a moral to every engagement story? Should there be one? Most broadly, are academics storytellers? As you'll see my answers to these questions are somewhat apparent in the discussions of individual stories. The consequence of my actions is that some authors may feel unduly judged for a structure and discourse they did not create. A retort might be something like, "This is the way my writing has to look if I want to be published." I'm sympathetic but still feel a need to pose critical questions--highlighting of course that these are structural challenges rather than individual character flaws of the authors. We didn't create structures we've been put into, but we are complicit in their



reproduction. Changing anything we do requires us to respond to normative questions about what we ought to be doing now. There are indeed problems and consequences that attend me asking normative questions. A meta-critique of this project should question--"Was it worth it?"

Here's a second limit. I am who I am—to some degree. By that I mean that my perspective is positioned in a certain way. There are many things that are outside my field of vision. Consequently my interpretation at any point can be accused of being biased or under-informed. That being said, so can any of yours. All mutual accusation aside, we can decide to either deny the philosophy that knowledge is situated, or acknowledge it and debate on better ways to use our mutual limits to our mutual benefit. I'm quite willing to entertain that second avenue of action. I'm a big proponent of the need to dialogue around our different interpretations of the world, hence this format. I'm also willing to support anyone's willingness to interpret engagement stories from other perspectives, and through other methods. What I'm not willing to stomach is that some person, or some method can arrive at *the* right and ultimate truth about what engagement is, or should be—that includes me and this writing rather emphatically.

My position in this paper, that I'm not bringing you *the* truth about engagement, surfaces the big question of validity. I've discussed ways that narrative studies approach this question in the large appendix to this dissertation, but I'll give a short synopsis here. Suffice to say, that stories are never true in the same way that a logico-reductivist thinks of truth. To juxtapose these ways of thinking, a logico-reductivist can claim that it is "true" that the earth revolves around the sun, while a narratologist, or any reader for that matter, can claim that Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is "true". But, that word "true" means very different things in each claim. One relies on decontextualized proof of universalized facts, the other relies on a much more nuanced interpretation of something that is true to human experience--it speaks to us in some way. As Jerome Bruner(1986) notes, narrative in comparison to logic or science is a different mode of thought entirely and requires a different approach to determine if a story fits—if it's trustworthy, and worthwhile. Clifford Geertz(1988) describes a central

element of validity in narrative work when he describes the challenge of getting an “honest story, honestly told” (p. 9).

At the end of the day the validity of this piece will rest on its contextualized validity--which requires I remain true to the circumstances in which a story was told—and to some extent try to explore those circumstances further. It also requires a focus on catalytic validity—which asks if a story, and by extension this paper, achieved its rhetorical purpose in furthering a conversation. I'll add that furthering a conversation isn't the same as trying to sell you something. My goal is not to claim or convince or debate. It's similar to how we'd judge a work of (historical) fiction. Dostoevsky's work for instance was "true" in that it explored a contextually evident environment and sparked a conversation around the rise of nihilism in the late 19th century. Likewise my work should first be judged on its ability to truthfully convey engagement stories while acknowledging my own perspective as limited. Secondly, a question should be posed as to whether this overall effort has furthered worthwhile discussions on the topic of engagement. In sum, neither I, nor my method can confer truth alone. Determining any trustworthiness in this story, and in this scholarship, requires a multitude in conversation.

Lastly, it's apparent that I've made choices throughout this text regarding which articles to include, which quotes to choose, and to some extent, which stories to tell. A valid critique can always highlight how a story's base, as in any performance, was "cherry-picked" from certain textual markers and not others. In what is to follow you will see vignettes of various engagement stories—I didn't make these up, I didn't conjure them from the ether, but I *did* make choices on what to include and what not to include. The vignettes you'll read are similar to many articles you would read in the engagement archive, but you'd likely never read an article that matches any one other story exactly. Most articles are an amalgam of a number of different storylines and in this chapter I've worked toward an ideal type of each story. Such a practice has its limits and opportunities.

These stories are limited by the fact that they are filtered through my own perspective, which is informed by various experiences in engagement. Albeit along with the practices of

discourse and narrative interpretation, this exercise is inherently limited and opinionated. While this perspective guides my gaze, the stories I'm telling aren't fairytales--they're actually out there, in print and practice. You can see direct quotations used throughout the accompanying charts (and the interactive figures on the website) that you'll be introduced to on the next page. I've also included the audit trail as an appendix to the text through which you can challenge my choices.

In my opinion, the opportunities for this work far outweigh the limits or risks of this chapter. The vignettes you'll read have been meticulously handcrafted to present patches of the current terrain of engagement in our public institutions. As with any work of art, these stories were made with intent though their meaning is open to further interpretation. I'm by no means a master of this storytelling craft--I need improvement and I acknowledge that. I've taken a number of risks in this writing, and I've failed on a number of counts that you'd do well to call me on. Once again the meta-critique of this project in my view is, "Was it worth it?"

I hope so.

## Appendix D: Engagement Typologies

A number of folks have made typologies that are pertinent to our understanding of engagement. In this appendix I will gather a dozen typologies that speak to engagement in general or to a specific facet of engagement (i.e. service learning, science communication, etc.). Each typology has a graphic and accompanying text. They are arranged chronologically.

### Sherry Arnstein (1969)

The most cited and downloaded article of the Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Sherry Arnstein's (1969) typology of citizen participation still weighs in heavily on the discourse surrounding engagement. It was written at a height of citizen participation discourse surrounding the Johnson administration's urban renewal campaigns and it provided a sharp critique to participation tactics that preserved the status-quo of administrative power. While heralding a season of soul-searching in citizen groups, NGOs, and government agencies the typology has been accused of assuming a rather limited definition of power and glossing over the varied tasks that agencies might need take on in democratic society.

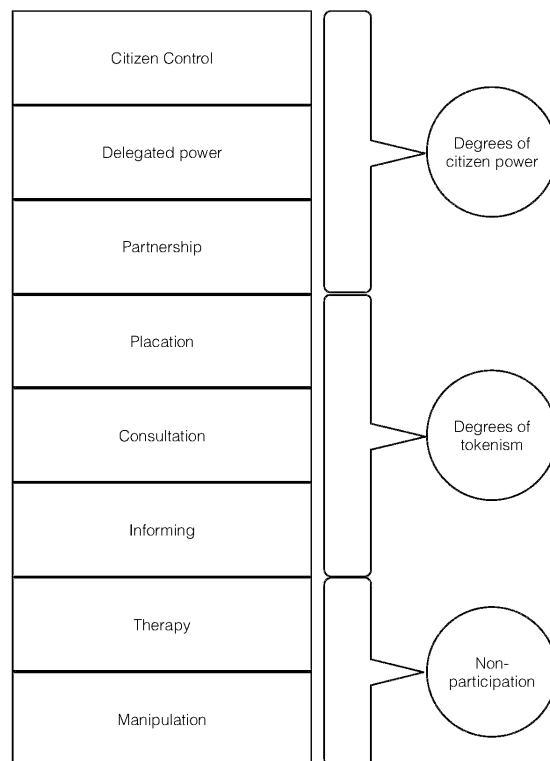


Figure 5: Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

In this typology Arnstein builds largely off of first-hand and second-hand stories of citizen participation practices, particularly those used by local planning departments and

federal government agencies, specifically HUDD, during the urban renewal programs of the late 1960s. Arnstein's ladder consisting of 8 rungs and three different categories of activities is a definite hierarchy that advocates for more citizen power in influencing decisions. Ideally, in her continuum, a majority of agency activities should fall on the top rungs of the ladder.

Arnstein describes the 8 rungs as such:

*The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1 ) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants*

...

*Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have- nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful, When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no followthrough, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation, is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power-holders the continued right to decide.*

...

*Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders. At the topmost rungs, (7)*

*Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power (all quotes from Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).*

As you can see Arnstein's typology refers heavily to power differentials between haves and have nots. In doing so, I believe she usefully amplified a rebuke of "participation-washing" being perpetuated on communities by administrative agencies. However the type of power highlighted in the typology could be described as "power over." Power in Arnstein's typology, whether held by administrators or citizens, is described as the power to control the outcomes of decision-making processes. Arnstein's typology intended to be controversial and by mounting a direct amplification of how administrative power is often experienced by have nots, she caused quite a bit of discussion in administrative circles.

#### **Desmond Connor (1988)**

Given Arnstein's pivotal role in the discussion on civic participation we would expect many authors after her to try to improve upon her typology or develop a typology more useful to their particular professional role. In a little-known piece, Desmond Connor proposed "A New Ladder of Citizen Participation." I include Connor's typology here because it attempts to improve upon Arnstein's typology, yet Connor takes his in a very different direction--one I'd imagine Arnstein would vehemently disagree with. Taken together Arnstein's and Connor's quite vertical typologies show us how a ladder's top rung influences the broad purpose that the whole of the typology serves. While Arnstein places "Citizen Control" at the top of her ladder, Connor places "Resolution/Prevention" at the top of his.

Connor (1988) opens his arguments by saying,

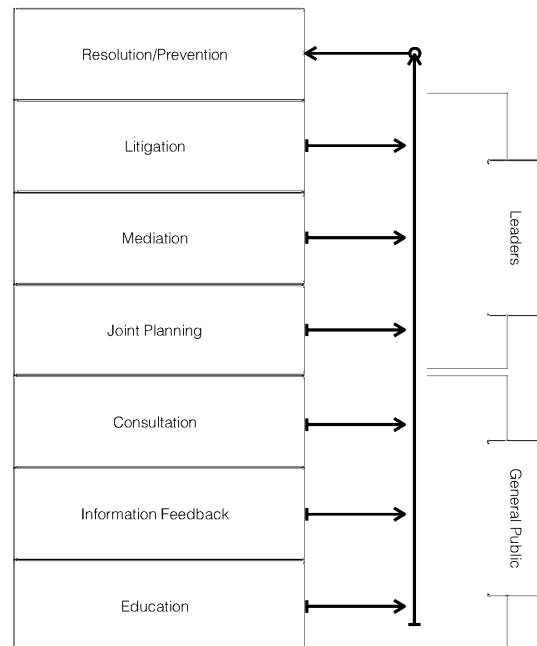
*Citizen participation is a many splendored thing, but is one that has its price. When its many and diverse practitioners start to discuss alternative approaches to specific issues, the result sometimes resembles the Tower of Babel, with all the busy builders quite unable to communicate with one another (ibid, p. 249).*

At first it may seem that Connor wants to do away with the muddle in these conversations, but upon further perusal it might just be that he wants to do away with difference. He takes issue with the fact that Arnstein's ladder, in addition to her own stated shortcomings, "addresses urban, black ghettos rather than a range of urban, suburban, and rural situations"(ibid., p. 250). Additionally the ladder "suggests no logical progression from one level to another"(ibid). Connor's goal was to establish a ladder that applied to fuller range of situations and had some sense of logical progression toward the ultimate objective.

However Connor's objective was far different than Arnstein's. According to Connor, "The purpose of this ladder is to provide a systematic approach to preventing and resolving public controversy about specific policies, programs and projects whether in urban, suburban, or rural settings and whether governmental or private sector in sponsorship(ibid., p. 250).

Given this ultimate goal of the typology, the preceding rungs look far different than Arnstein's. In Connor's description, the first rung, Education, is "the foundation of any program to prevent and resolve public controversy....Proponents [of a given policy]

cannot afford to have substantial portions of their key constituencies ignorant of their objectives, activities, effects, and plans" (ibid., pp. 250-251). While Connor describes this education process as mutual, its tone is reminiscent of deficiency-centered education. Oftentimes, Connor states, that when a sufficient informational base is present, an intervention



**Figure 6: A new ladder of citizen participation—Connor (1988)**

will be met with understanding and acceptance, whereby you can ascend to the top of the ladder (Resolution/Prevention).

If a program is not accepted, then administrators may climb to the second rung, Information Feedback. Here a type of "information audit will disclose not only information gaps, but show the presence of negative myths and stereotypes (e.g., "engineers only heed cost-benefit analyses") which must be confronted."

If both rung 1 and rung 2 have failed to lead to resolution/prevention, Connor recommends moving on to the more "comprehensive and powerful strategy of consulting" (ibid, 253). He describes this as an "advisory process. The proponent [of a given intervention] may accept or reject the views expressed by the public"(ibid). Consultation is the last rung that includes what Connor calls the general public.

The first rung that involves "leaders" is that of Joint Planning, which Connor recommends if a party has legal jurisdiction over some aspects of the area affected. If this joint planning between "authoritative representatives" is unsuccessful, then Connor's ladder moves into a more litigious direction where the last two rungs of Mediation and Litigation are the means to Resolution.

Connor's typology is not without some merit. At a number of points in the article, we get glimmers of a more flexible and citizen-centric concept of government. However it is explicitly and obviously written for folks in managerial roles and it largely conforms to assumptions built into hierarchical structures. For me it's informative insofar as it makes apparent the sharp difference between government's purpose as envisioned by managers and as envisioned by citizens. Paired with Arnstein we get two very different concepts of governance. In Arnstein the ultimate goal is "citizen control," in Connor, it seems to be reaching consensus at best, but more bluntly it hints of managing dissent.

#### **Keith Morton (1995)**

Morton's typology is specifically geared toward discussing the then-rather-nascent discourse and practice of service learning. He brings in two questions to his research: 1) is there



a continuum of service learning experiences and 2) do different type of service have different impacts because of individual characteristics (Morton, 1995, p. 19). At the time, discussions on service learning described a continuum of service ranging from service and charity to advocacy and justice--from the personal to the political. Morton notes that,

*In this compelling description, one moves from charity to advocacy motivated by a growing care for the people served, and by an increasingly complex analysis of the situation that created the need for service in the first place. Advocacy need not replace charity, but advocacy is a more mature expression of compassion(*ibid., p. 20).

The common notion was for students to progress from one end of the continuum to the other.

Morton didn't see evidence of this continuum in interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and community partners. Instead Morton interpreted three distinct but interrelated paradigms of service learning: charity, project, and social change. As part of his research Morton hoped to show the consequences of viewing service through a continuum rather than paradigmatic lens. While continuums may suggest a more streamlined developmental approach, paradigms required a different approach to pedagogy.

Paradigms according to Morton are "based upon distinctive world views, ways of identifying and addressing problems, and long-term visions of individual and community transformation" (ibid, p. 21). Furthermore he saw how each paradigm could have both thick and thin manifestations. Pedagogically this required two things, challenging students to think more deeply in their paradigm of work, and "intentionally exposing students to creative dissonance among the three forms" (ibid.)

Morton juxtaposes continuum advocates, Ivan Illich, John McKnight, and the Industrial Areas Foundation with some who dissent from a continuum view, namely Harry Boyte and his focus on distinct types of civic action that have their accompanying faults and promises. However Morton claims that Boyte's model isn't well placed to think of service, and by extension--service learning, in any way but a weak form of charity.

Developing a paradigmatic way of looking at charity, projects, and social change Morton quotes community leaders and students alike who acknowledge both thin and thick ways of doing their specific genre of community action. I've summarized these in the table below.

**Table 7: Thin and thick descriptions of three service paradigms from Morton (1995).**

<b>Service Paradigms</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>At its thinnest:</b>	<b>At its thickest:</b>
<b>Charity</b>	Providing direct service to another person	The well-off doing service to the poor if and when they feel like it and then only on their terms	A spiritually based service, outside of time and space that bears witness to the worth of other persons
<b>Project</b>	Implementing or participating in service programs through community organizations	Competing for funding and implementing projects for the sole purpose of fulfilling organizational objectives	Organizations that collaborate with publics in particular and are attentive to those needs while committed to ethical modes of leadership
<b>Social Change</b>	Transformational models of systemic change	An narrow ideological commitment to a specific set of issues/ philosophies largely ungrounded in community or place-based accountability.	Deeply accountable, often place-based and relational work of organizing communities while attending to various interests, and aspirations

Morton finds "the thick versions of each paradigm are grounded in deeply held, internally coherent values; match means and ends; describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world; offer a way of defining problems and solutions; and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like( *ibid.*, p. 28)." Unfortunately, Morton didn't get really specific on his interpretation of each of these facets in his article or I would have included them here. In the end, at the thick end of things he sees these paradigms as blending more seamlessly or being at least complimentary.

For Morton these paradigms raise questions about whether teachers advocate for one particular type of service or hold up choices for students to consider. He highlights the need, in acknowledging paradigms of service, that teachers attend more seriously to how their classroom content and service paradigm might reinforce rather than question one another.

Some more controversial points of Morton's study, the rather quantitative analysis of student preference for particular paradigms is a bit more spurious and I haven't included it here. His finding that students often prefer a charity paradigm has been questioned by Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh(2006). However both of these studies lean on some fuzzy methods when measuring students preferences or perceived efficacy at different service-oriented tasks which all fail to consider developmental capacity in the Deweyan sense. Furthermore both studies are student-centric in nature--which is an odd way to analyze "third-space" activities like service-learning or engagement. The questions of who remains the arbiter of best fit in choosing one paradigm over another is left frightfully unanswered.

Still and all, the move from strict continuums to a recognition of different forms of justifiable, and ethical civic action is a significant development in the discussion.

#### **Elizabeth Rocha (1997)**

This particular typology brings in the language of empowerment and to some extent might help us think about ways to conceive "agency" in engagement stories. In some ways mirroring Arnstein's ladder, Rocha veers away from Arnstein's limited way of conceiving power. Instead she brings in McClelland(1975) to discuss modes of power other than just the ability a "self" has to control the decisions of an "other." She discusses power that looks more like autonomous power, as well as transcendent power focused on the self (as in God, mentors, external goods), and external powers that influence others such as laws, policy, and organizational membership. In Rocha's ladder, this last stage, Stage 4 in McClelland's conception of power is the good which empowerment should strive for.

According to Rocha (1997) this final stage is the arena of sharing, and "selfless service to an ideal"(p. 33). Rocha explains:

*One the first rung of the ladder lies "atomistic individual" empowerment. This is simply intended to affect the individual in a solitary unit. Type two, "embedded individual," a form of individual empowerment, considers the embeddedness of the individual in larger*

structures or settings. Type three, “mediated,” has application to both individual and community empowerment. It describes empowerment in the context of a mediating relationship between expert and client. In this model, empowerment is considered to be services (knowledge) rendered by the expert that are consumed by, and benefit, the individual or community. Types four and five both shift from a focus on individual empowerment to a focus on community empowerment as the ultimate goal. However, each type addressed the process of community empowerment differently. Type four, “socio-political,” emphasizes the development of a politicized link between individual circumstance and community conditions through collective social action, challenging oppressive institutional arrangements. The fifth type, “political empowerment,” is a model of empowerment in which the locus of change is strictly community or group, operationalized through changes in, for example, public policy or increased access to community resources.

**Table 8: The ladder of empowerment as described in Rocha (1997)**

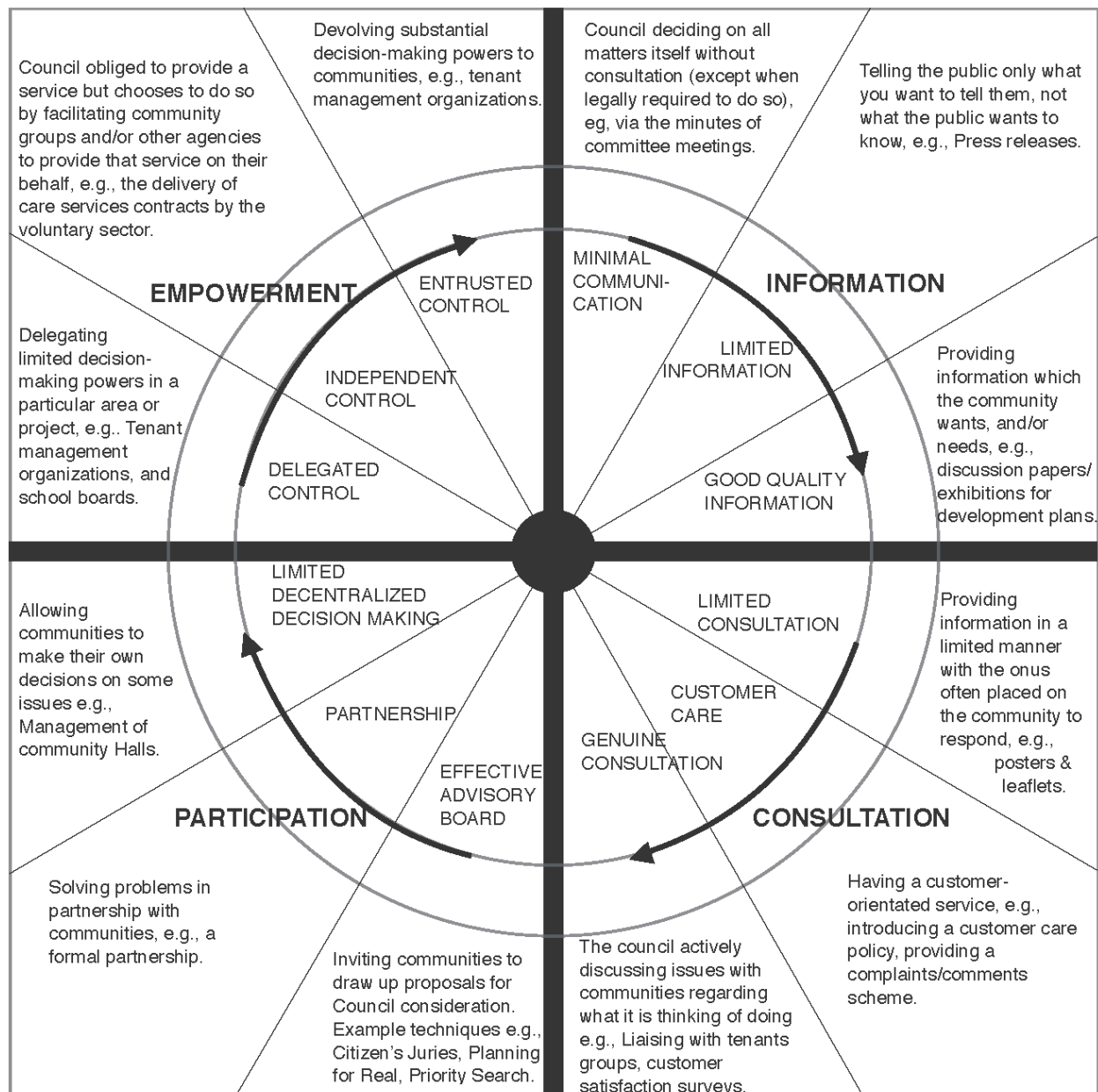
Rung	Name	Description	Locus	Goal	Process	Power Experience
5	Political	Empowerment where the locus is solely on the community and operationalized through changes in public policy or increased access to community resources	Community	Expanded access to community services, goods, and rights	Political action, voting, protest, & political representation	Influence, coercion, and assertion.
4	Socio-political	Empowerment through the linking of individual circumstances and community conditions through collective action, and challenging oppressive institutional structures	Individual & community	Individual development & expanded access to community resources	Organizational participation & collaborative grassroots action	Support, strengthen self, influence/coerce others, and togetherness
3	Mediated	Empowerment in the context of a mediating relationship between expert and client	Individual & community	Knowledge & information for proper decision making	Professional/client relationship	Support, strengthen self, control by helping, and moralized action
2	Embedded Individual	Empowerment of the individual in relation as they are embedded within larger structures in society	Individual	Personal satisfaction & competence in negotiating daily environment	Organizational participation	Nurturing support, direct & control self
1	Atomistic Individual	Empowerment intended to affect the individual as a solitary unit	Individual	Personal satisfaction & increased coping ability	Therapy, daily living skills, & self-help	Nurturing support

While I agree we need to think about power in a more complex way than Arnstein did, I'm a bit frustrated with the Western dualism of self and other that leaks into Rocha's typology via McClelland. The idea of an ultimate empowerment being this selfless act is a step toward institutionalized corruption and reification of the difference between self and other. Unsurprisingly Rocha claims that the ultimate empowerment comes via the state centric application of rules, policies, and service to others. The typology is also a very concept-driven construction, building on prior theory which may not hold much use for how "empowerment" is experienced in various groups. Still and all, questioning what is meant by empowerment is a helpful when looking at engagement stories.

**Scott Davidson (1998)**

In some ways echoing Morton, Davidson discusses how there are different legitimate ways of thinking about participation in a public setting. Scott Davidson in this short article shares discussions held by the South Lanarkshire Council—a Scottish Municipality. The goal was to have such public councils be more precise about the goals they had for public participation. At its broadest the claim of this typology is that the techniques should match the aims. The council divided these aims into four distinct categories: information, empowerment, participation, and consultation. Starting the conversation around how these four aims are legitimate tasks of public institutions, the Wheel of Empowerment then discusses thin and thick versions of each.

I see this as a useful tool. However Davidson's discussion of its use in practice leaves me questioning a few aspects of the wheel. Namely, who is the arbiter of best fit? Is it the council who decides which aim is appropriate for a given situation or do those decisions happen in another forum? I don't see this question as insurmountable but it does bear asking. It is a very institution-centric wheel but it has its merits—particularly as it forces the need to be clear about one's intentions in a given arena.



**Figure 7: The wheel of empowerment as described in Davidson (1998)**

### **David Perry (2000) as cited in Gaffikin & Morrissey (2008)**

This typology, cited from an unpublished paper, is in many ways a meta-typology. In some ways it bears resemblance to my curiosity about engagement stories in that it discusses central metaphors that have dominated university life throughout time. The typology is self explanatory and attempts to follow a very chronological idealization but it's quite useful in

bluntly naming and framing these epochs. According to Perry (2000), cited in Gaffikin and Morrissey(2008, p. 102), the models include the “ivory tower,” “non-partisan,” “service,” “outreach,” and “engagement” models.

**Table 9: Five models of university relations to public life from Perry (2000)**

University Model	Description
Ivory Tower	the detached institution, based on its early monastic traditions, encouraging retreat from the world to optimize considered reflection.
Non-partisan	not totally detached, but very circumspect about its involvements, particularly in a divided society, to avoid accusation of bias. Being ‘above’ the conflict is seen as safer than being ‘drawn into’ the conflict.
Service	a somewhat paternalistic approach to offering the wider society limited and sporadic support from volunteer staff and students, but where the power, status and discretion rest exclusively with the institution.
Outreach	an advance on the ‘service’ concept, with a more organized outreach into community. But, the knowledge transfer is seen to be largely one way and still very much on the university’s terms.
Engaged	based on equal exchange between academy and community, and rooted in a mutually supportive partnership that fosters a formal strategic long-term collaborative arrangement. Alongside a more systematic outreach by the university, it allows for the community’s ‘in-reach’ into the institution, whereby it can help transform the nature of academy.

Gaffikin & Morrissey (2008) don’t spend a great deal of time discussing this typology but rather move on to detail their desire for and practice of institutionalizing engagement in a particular setting. Within their discussion is some talk of these models still holding sway in university politics. Their definition of engagement involving the dissolution of simple dichotomies between “experiential” knowledges of communities and “formal” knowledges of the university is correct in my view (ibid, p. 102). Yet, most universities that are institutionalizing engagement hesitate to name that distinction and furthermore recognize what it means for institutional structure.

### **Joby Taylor (2002)**

The typology presented in Joby Taylor’s (2002) *Metaphors We Serve By* bears the most resemblance to my own effort. Taylor uses metaphors to interpret service learning in a similar

vein to how I use stories to interpret engagement writ-large. Both of these methods are "text-critical" in that they perform critical interpretations of the written and spoken word in relation to history and practice. Additionally Taylor divides metaphors *of* service, being largely historical concepts of service manifest in institutions, from metaphors *for* service, which are emergent or at least possible metaphors for service that are largely unrecognized by institutional power. Keeping an eye to the emergent nature of service learning parallels to my effort in discussing lines-of-argument and hinting at other stories for engagement that are possible though often not dominant in academic or institutional discourse.

I'm rather fond of this typology and think its openness is key to self-exploration around these metaphors. It's well embedded in history, includes further reading, and doesn't set hard and fast rules around the choices we have in the service we seek.



**Table 10: Joby Taylor's (2002) Metaphors of service and for service**

	Metaphor	Description	History	Examples
Metaphor of service	<b>Service is war</b>	Participants are mobilized and deployed to attack social problems. This has been called a redirection of the militaristic values toward service to the state.	With a similar root to the militaristic instinct inherent in the war of man versus nature Taylor positions this metaphor as being embedded in William James' psychology and making its way into US policy culture during the Great Depression and World Wars.	Civilian Conservation Corps, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and various wars on poverty, drugs, etc.
	<b>Service is business</b>	A concept of service that is tightly tied to returns on investment. These types of service emphasize value added in public/private partnership and numeric scrutiny over cost/benefit.	Positioned as beginning around the same time that the US government set up the Corporation for National Service in 1993 This was originally designed to be substantially supported by corporate sponsors.	Corporation for National Service, The Department of Service Learning, RAND Corporation reports,
	<b>Service is citizenship development</b>	A normative idea about what constitutes good service. As opposed to charity which is shallow and paternalistic, service as citizenship development or social change is the democratic ideal.	Against a class-based notion of service as charity, John Dewey positions citizenship development through pragmatist philosophy fueling an aspect of the Progressive Era.	The scholarship of John Saltmarsh, Peter Block and Benjamin Barber; John McKnight and the Asset-Based Community Development Institute.
Metaphor for service	<b>Service is charity</b>	Echoing Keith Morton, this metaphor for service as charity reconsiders charity as akin to it's spiritual roots. it is not a thin service to the other but a profound spiritual bond and method of accountability.	Charity came under ill repute following the critique by John Dewey that charity operated in a paternalistic fashion. Martin Luther King Jr. among others reinvigorated a sense of charity centered service going beyond paternalism.	Robert Coles' (1993) <i>The Call of Service</i> , Keith Morton (1995)
	<b>Service is text</b>	In an effort to reintegrate the traditional classroom work of the academy and the experience base of service pedagogues have begun to consider both realms as "text" which can be read and interpreted as outlined in Derrida for instance.	In an effort to highlight the experiential component of learning, pedagogues often poorly integrated useful in-class texts into course-work. As a consequence students failed to integrate in-class learning with experience. The two academics at right are credited with working to redress this.	Keith Morton (1995), Lori Varlotta (2000)
	<b>Service is border crossing</b>	Service is a terrain where political, cultural, and ideological differences overlap. A broad metaphor of service that requires a different approach to pedagogy.	Gloria Anzaldúa described a concept of mestiza consciousness she and others assumed in building bridges in the borderlands. Henry Giroux appropriated these terms in describing a new kind of critical pedagogy.	Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Henry Giroux(1992), Hayes & Cuban (1997), Keith (1998)

### **Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton (2004)**

This white paper discussion on university engagement makes a pretty sharp delineation of engagement along democratic and un-democratic lines. As you can see from Taylor (2002),

Saltmarsh is definitely entrenched in the “Engagement is citizenship development” vein. That comes through in this typology below.

**Table 11: Comparing civic engagement frameworks in Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton (2004)**

	<b>Civic Engagement (Focus on Activity and Place)</b>	<b>Democratic Civic Engagement (Focus on Purpose and Process)</b>
Community relationships	Partnerships and mutuality	Reciprocity
	Deficit-based understanding of community	Asset-based understanding of community
	Academic work done <i>for</i> the public	Academic work done <i>with</i> the public
Knowledge production/research	Applied	Inclusive, collaborative, problem-oriented
	Unidirectional flow of knowledge	Multi-directional flow of knowledge
Epistemology	Positivist/scientific/technocratic	Relational, localized, contextual
	Distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers	Co-creation of knowledge
	Primacy of academic knowledge	Shared authority for knowledge creation
	University as center of public problem-solving	University as a part of an ecosystem of knowledge production addressing public problem-solving
Political dimension	Apolitical engagement	Facilitating an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy
Outcome	Knowledge generation and dissemination through community involvement	Community change that results from the co-creation of knowledge

In my mind these frameworks are useful discussion points in so far as they try to take the gray area out of question. However, in practice, I’d imagine many engagement stories fall smack dab in the gray area.

**Rowe & Frewer (2005)**

These authors contribute a very complicated view of public engagement as it applies to science. Citing a plethora of engagement mechanisms that span types of interactions from cable TV broadcasts, to citizen’s juries, Rowe & Frewer take on a rather ambitious big-tent project of categorizing these various mechanisms. I’ve simplified their findings in the table below where FTF refers to “face to face” mechanisms of engagement.

**Table 12: Aspects and types of public engagement mechanisms in Rowe & Frewer (2005)**

Engagement aspects	Definition of competence/efficiency	Types identified	Examples
<b>Public communication</b>	Maximizing the relevant information from the sponsor and efficiently transferring it (with minimal information loss) to the maximum number of the relevant population, with the efficient processing of that information by the receivers (the public/participants)	Four: Variations on FTF and non-FTF interaction, controlled and uncontrolled selection, and set and flexible information	Traditionally publicity through newspapers, or television; public hearings; drop-in centers, or online information; and hotline support
<b>Public consultation</b>	Maximizing the relevant information from the maximum number of the relevant population and efficiently transferring it (with minimal information loss) to the sponsor, with the efficient processing of that information by the receivers (the sponsors)	Six: As above but instead of information consideration there are also factors of facilitated or non-facilitated elicitation, open and closed response modes, and structured or unstructured aggregation	Opinion polling or surveys; consultation documents; interactive websites; focus groups; study circles or open spaces; and citizen panels
<b>Public participation</b>	Maximizing the relevant information from the maximum number of all relevant sources and transferring it (with minimal information loss) to the other parties, with the efficient processing of that information by the receivers (the sponsors and participants) and the combining of it into an accurate composite.	Four: all types are FTF, involve flexible information and have open response modes though selection is controlled or uncontrolled, aggregation is structured or unstructured, and elicitation is facilitated or not	Action planning workshops or citizen’s juries; negotiated rule making or task forces; deliberative opinion polling or planning cells; and town meetings (New England model)—with voting

I cannot think, for the life of me, why anyone would put themselves through such a methodical quest to construct this typology. I’m impressed by their commitment to the idea but it turns out rather unreadable and there isn’t really an a-ha moment in this 40-page paper. It’s clear to me that Rowe & Frewer are scientists first and foremost, and they’re interested in making “engagement” a well-oiled machine. This extensive cataloging of the parts is laudable even though it may remain laughable.

#### **Derek Barker (2006)**

Yet another discussion that engagement is a many splendored thing, Derek Barker’s short discussion on five emerging practices in engagement is for me a welcome return to the

practicality of difference. It's a humble contribution and Barker recognizes that. The short article also points to a number of organizations that have these practices as central to their principles and theories of change (though he doesn't use that language).

**Table 13: Five emerging practices in the scholarship of engagement in Barker (2006)**

Practice	Theory	Problems Addressed	Methods
Public Scholarship	Deliberative Democracy	Complex "public problems requiring deliberation	Face to face, open forums
Participatory Research	Participatory Democracy	Inclusion of specific groups	Face to face collaboration with specific publics
Community Partnership	Social Democracy	Social change, structural transformation	Collaboration with intermediary groups
Public Information Networks	Democracy (broadly understood)	Network, communication	Databases of public resources
Civic Literacy Scholarship	Democracy (broadly understood)	Enhancing public discourse	Communication with general public

Another refreshing aspect of the typology you see above is an overt discussion of the different kinds of democracy that might be believed in engagement practice. For me it brings up that many models of service and even detachment can be supported as "engaged" through the lens of representative democracy. This conversation, or elephant in the room, is often avoided in more friendly gatherings of engaged practitioners.

### **Burgess & Chilvers (2006)**

Writing in the realm of *Science & Public Policy* these authors outline some major strategies to involve the public in decision making vis-à-vis science. Once again they range from TV to citizens' juries. Thankfully, Burgess & Chilvers go a bit further in explaining each along with troubling the question of who chooses which fits best.

**Table 14: Six strategies of public engagement with science--Burgess & Chilvers (2006)**

Engagement strategy	Description	Methods
<b>S1. Education and information provision</b>	At-distance communication of information and educational material to individual members of the public and stakeholders with no feedback mechanism. Main purpose is to raise awareness and increase understanding. Equally applicable to local through to national scale levels. On its own, informing is a form of engagement but not participation. Information provision often provides essential support to other forms of consultation and participation, however.	- leaflets, brochures, information pack, video, newsletters, exhibitions/displays (non-staffed), advertising, media (TV, radio, newspapers), Internet (information provision)
<b>S2. Consultation (predominantly open to all)</b>	Various approaches to providing information and receiving feedback that are potentially open to all types of participant (ie professional and local stakeholders, and the public). Engagement can either be at-distance or face-to-face (with individuals or groups) and tends to be in the form of one-off events or initiatives. Face-to-face approaches are limited to the local scale (but can reach national coverage if repeated), whereas at-distance approaches can cover all scales from national through to local.	- Site visits (for instance, Renn et al, 1993), exhibitions/displays (staffed), open house, consultation document, Internet (information/feedback) (for instance, Finney, 1999), free telephone line (automated or staffed), teleconferencing, public meeting (see Fiorino, 1990), public inquiry
<b>S3. Consultation (targeting the public/citizens)</b>	Citizens are targeted through statistically representative samples to take part in quantitative surveys to test 'public opinion', or are recruited to participate in qualitative approaches based on shared demographic features. Quantitative surveys can be at-distance allowing wide national coverage, but lack in-depth reasoned responses. In-depth qualitative approaches allow face-to-face individual or group deliberation and thus tend to be locally situated (but can reach national coverage through multiple processes). These methods can be used in front-end framing to benchmark public opinion and underlying values, issues and concerns; or employed to gauge responses to developments or proposals as the decision process evolves. The researcher provides the link to the decision-maker in the form of a report.	Questionnaire survey (postal, web-based), interview survey (face-to-face, telephone), focus groups (for instance, Morgan and Kruger, 1998), in-depth groups (for instance, Burgess et al, 1988a; 1988b), deliberative opinion poll, referenda (for instance, Buchmann, 1995).
<b>S4. Dialogue/deliberation (groups of predominantly local stakeholders)</b>	Methods that seek to engage local stakeholders, selected to represent the interests of others or as surrogates of the 'general public', over extended periods in group deliberation and dialogue. Participants identify local issues and concerns, set priorities and agree on recommendations for action. Some approaches involve stakeholders in framing and actively engaging in technical-analytic aspects of decision processes (for instance, participatory research), while others involve local stakeholders in the evaluation and prioritisation of policy options. In most cases, participants form interactive relationships with decision-makers and specialists.	Community advisory committees (CACs) (for instance, Lynn and Busenberg, 1995; Petts 1997), participatory research (for instance, Brown, 1987; Fischer, 2000), planning for real, visioning, workshops, Internet dialogue
<b>S5. Deliberation/dialogue (groups of predominantly professional stakeholders)</b>	Approaches that seek to engage (predominantly) professional stakeholders, selected to represent the interests of others, over extended periods in group deliberation and dialogue. The most common approaches for this strategy are stakeholder workshops and stakeholder dialogue. This strategy also includes approaches that involve stakeholders in framing and actively engaging in technical-analytic aspects of decision processes and/or the evaluation and prioritisation of policy options. Participants predominantly draw on their own information and specialist knowledge. In most approaches, participants form interactive relationships with decision-makers and specialists. This strategy might also include techniques that seek to identify areas of consensus and difference on issues or proposals among groups of professional stakeholders at a distance.	Consensus building and mediation (for instance, Baughman, 1995) - Stakeholder decision analysis (for instance, Clark et al, 1998)- Multi-criteria mapping (for instance, Stirling and Mayer, 2001)- Joint fact finding, and other forms of collaborative analysis (for instance, Baughman, 1995; Busenberg, 1999)- Delphi process (for instance, Rowe et al, 1991; Renn et al, 1993) - Stakeholder dialogue - Workshops - Internet dialogue
<b>S6. Deliberation/dialogue (groups of citizens and specialists)</b>	Innovative deliberative approaches that engage citizens, often recruited to be representatives of the wider public, in panels over extended periods of responsive information provision, considering issues and providing recommendations to decision-makers. Citizens interact with specialists (or experts) at various points throughout the process—available methods differ in degree and nature of this interaction and thus the extent of mutual learning and capacity building between panelists and specialists. Some methods have been developed for national level policy, while others are only established at local geographic scales (but have the potential to be scaled up),	Deliberative mapping (for instance Davies <i>et al</i> , 2003, Burgess et al, 2004; Davies and Burgess 2004), consensus conference (for instance, Joss and Durrant, 1995; Guston 1999), citizens' juries (for instance, Crosby, 1995; Coote and Lanaghan, 1996) citizens' panels/planning cells (for instance Dienel and Renn, 1995), research panels, interactive panels

Burgess & Chilvers are aware of the controversies that can arise around who gets to decide which strategy is appropriate to the situation. They cite a number of missteps and lessons learned from the UK's *GM Nation* experience. Yet they also seem to defer much of their

thinking about this to how sponsors of a given discussion might think about the choice of strategy.

*A fundamental purpose of participatory activity from the perspective of the sponsor (and the participants if they are committed to co-operative social action), is to achieve agreement by consensus if at all possible, with the end result being commitment both to the agreement and to its purpose. However, this is not to assume that divergence between the knowledge claims and value positions of participants in a process should be ignored or downplayed. If a process has been conducted fairly and the reasoning used to arrive at a decision is recognized as being valid in the public sphere, then dissenters should be expected to continue to co-operate (ibid., p. 721).*

Burgess and Chilvers do actively problematize this approach to consensus and dissent in their paper. Yet, I'd be interested to see how these processes pan out for participants that disagree fundamentally with the sponsoring organization. At the publication of this paper, Burgess & Chilvers were involved with the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management which involved some forty-three "participatory process experts" (ibid.)" That sounds like a hefty task.

**Nicola Marks (2008; 2013)**

In her dissertation and later paper Marks analyses the discourse of 41 individual interviewees—scientists of varying seniority levels—about their conception of science as it relates to the public. All of these scientists worked in the area of stem cell research and had varying experience of public engagement. She then grouped these discourses into six different ideal types that regularly came up in everyday conversation. I've represented these types, along with scientists' self attributes, the flow of engagement, and the types of capital/attributes they presuppose in the table below.

**Table 15: Six ideal types of public engagement with science in Marks (2008; 2013)**

Engage- ment type	Engagement as:	Scientist attributes	Engagement flow	Publics	
				Who?	Attributes
I	Internal dialogue with scientists as publics— <b>Republic of science</b>	-Rational or try -Capital: all technical + all political	Scientists provide technical and political capital to support and question their own research. Scientist push technical capital to influence public	-Undifferentiated	-Emotional -Capital: none
II	Educating scientific consumers/citizens— <b>Advanced consumer democracy (Lib. dem)</b>	-Rational -Capital: all technical	Scientists push technical capital to influence public. Public push political (consumer) capital on scientists.	-Undifferentiated -Citizens -Consumers	-Emotional, but can try to be rational -Capital: political (vote, consume)
III	Recruiting publics/patients to support science or lobby— <b>Liberal democracy</b>	-Rational -Capital: all technical	Scientists push technical capital to influence lobby. Public through lobby push political capital on scientists	-Undifferentiated -Patients -Politicians	-Emotional, but can try to be rational, excludes extremists -Capital: political (lobby)
IV	Public relations to keep public at bay; scientists decide alone— <b>New republic of science</b>	-Rational or try -Capital: partial technical + partial political	Scientists support and question their own research, push technical capital on public. Public can potentially question research through legislation or funding	-Undifferentiated -Funders	-Emotional -Capital: political (can stop science)
V	Constructive conversation between rational experts to make decisions; these can be informed by public/ consumer opinions and views— <b>Elitist deliberative democracy</b>	-Rational or try -Capital: partial technical + partial political	Both scientists and (elite) publics push technical and political capital to influence approval or critique of science <b>AND/OR</b> Scientists bring technical and political capital to bear on public opinion. Publics push political capital to approve or disapprove of research	-Publics-in-particular: e.g. Intellectual property lawyers, legislators, patient reps <b>AND/OR</b> -Undifferentiated patients, citizens, and consumers	-Rational or try -Capital: Partial technical +partial political <b>AND/OR</b> -Emotional but can try to be rational -Capital: very partial political (convey emotions)
VI	Constructive conversations between people with multiple identities and knowledges to shape possible futures— <b>Radical/ plural democracy</b>	-Emotional and rational -Capital: multiple and partial	All parties bring cultural, political, technical, etc. capitals to bear on research endeavors and ways of understanding the world	-Multiple, include scientists	-Emotional and rational -Capital: multiple and partial

I find Marks' typology refreshing in that it builds on everyday discussions about these issues and rather unapologetically digs into their assumptions about the world. As a younger researcher I hope I can continue bringing that voice to the discussion on engagement as Marks has.

## **Appendix E: The Audit Trail**

### **December, 2013**

I've begun amassing a trove of articles detailing "engagement" work. The method behind this madness isn't clear yet. I've set up a Google Alert for resources that mention engagement and I've begun to take on a retrospective accumulation of "engagement" articles reaching back to 1990. I've also begun capturing all available articles from select journals such as the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, the *Journal for Civic Commitment*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, as well as the *Public Understanding of Science*

### **January-March, 2014**

These three months were spent refining proposal language for the entire dissertation but as it concerns this "Narrative Topography..." chapter it involved piecing together a method for selecting certain literature and developing a preliminary iterative cycle for interpretation. In the meantime I've amassed over 2000 articles pertinent to engagement discourse.

### **April, 2014**

Coming down from 2000 articles I've set aside the 500 case studies found therein that will form the original "data pool" for the narrative cartography method. I've also highlighted certain articles that may be pertinent for discussion sections of the overall text. The easiest way to describe the data pool is "case studies from peer-reviewed journal articles." However some notable exclusions that are left out of the data pool are as follows:

- Review articles which involve no thorough description of direct experience.
- Articles that are for the most part only student-centric--this excludes many articles in service learning that don't discuss relationships with people outside of the university in great detail.
- Articles that are primarily discussions of method. For instance, articles aren't included if they spend the largest portion of time discussing a method or model primarily. They may include a short description of how this method was used in practice but don't include a sufficient narration of experience.
- Concept articles. If the article on engagement is just about exploring that word, or a facet of that work through philosophical concepts without a substantial amount of time spent on describing a real case study of such concepts in action, then they haven't been included. However these texts will be prime for use in the discussion of final story types.
- Policy articles. Articles that focus primarily on large institutional interactions and advocate for certain policies without direct narration of experience aren't included.

Still, that leaves over 500 case studies of "engagement" that are peer-reviewed journal articles.

### **June 19, 2014**

I picked ten articles that seemed to represent rather different stories of engagement. I worked through five today and play to work through the next five tomorrow. Apparent today were the different stories of consultation, beta-testing, informing, technical assistance, and community control. I'm letting themes emerge from these stories and trying to find a more standard way to read each of them so I can get some good comparative points.

### **August 12, 2014**

I pulled 22 articles into the to-process pile. I did this at random. My method involved pulling out the first article of every letter in the alphabet that was represented in the 500 articles



I have so far. I'm trying to beef up my discussion of individual quotes and for now I'm bringing forward some discussion I had with the first seven articles focusing in on the discipline or setting of a piece, as well as how a problem or conflict in the story is named (what is it?), framed (what surrounds it?), set (who has it?), and solved (how does/did one seek/attain a solution?).

**August 16, 2014**

I've run up against a few articles that present some problems for interpretation. They're written by people who weren't direct participants in a particular project. Their very insightful case studies but it presents a problem as it separates the authorial self from the "self" in the story. They're very detached in a sense and are far more critical on average than those written by people directly involved. I've made a decision to not include these texts in the pool of articles for interpretation, but I am intent on using these resources as I discuss the various stories of engagement. So, I've added an exclusion/inclusion criterion--articles must be written by someone with a strong role in the story. This rule isn't hard and fast necessarily, but like the rest of this project is open to some interpretation.

[I've since learned some more refined ways of thinking about narration. Narratologists refer to homodiegetic narration when a narrator plays a more or less central role in the story at hand. Homodiegetic narration transitions into autodiegetic narration when the narrator is the actual protagonist of a story. I'm including all homodiegetic articles but autodiegetic seems to be the norm and in some ways preferential for seeing how classic institutions frame their engagement stories.--September 15]

**August 27, 2014**

I've revisited the large spreadsheet I've been using to collect various quotes and my thoughts. I've recently read a book by David Herman called *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Using this text as an inspiration I've tried to refine my discussion of individual quotes by associating them with various narrative speech acts. Among these are situating, worldmaking, visioning, disrupting, orienting, sequencing, positioning, selfing, othering, perceiving, evaluating, and moralizing. I've borrowed over half of these directly from narrative methods of interpretation and I've emphasized a few of my own in different ways.

This review of my notes has really refined the purpose behind my selecting of quotes to include. Keeping an eye to the narrative "moves" or "chunks" in an article is really helpful for presenting the story and finding differences between any two pieces.

It's useful, but now I have the very laborious task of revisiting everything I've read so far.

**September 4, 2014**

In reviewing the 40 plus articles I've been interpreting so far I've been moved to reframe some of their "Engagement as..." titles. For some articles it seemed I was categorizing them according to what they were trying to accomplish in the writing of the piece. For example one article was quite explicitly trying to promote e-governance. However e-governance is not really what they are claiming engagement is. At a more elemental level they were claiming that engagement required a certain understanding of the public that could be gained through rather detached data gathering. Another article was quite clearly advocating for a certain paradigm of development called ecohealth--though the article doesn't mention the method fully (it's more of an evaluative story) ecohealth is largely a model of doing behavior change programming, that being said the article, in reference to engagement equated it with a coordination of interventions.

This focus on the actions that articles are advocating others take helps to clarify some previous confusion between an articles rhetorical aim of promoting XYorZ paradigm or process, and the action and impact-oriented aim of a particular story of engagement. Most articles I'm reading are intent on promoting something, but finding some common root of what that something is--data gathering, or consulting, etc. is the challenge of this piece.

**September 22, 2014**

Over the weekend I admitted a bit of a defeat, as per my process/vision for these narratives. At one point I foresaw, after interpreting numerous articles, I could create an

amalgamated story, using around 90% direct quotes from individual articles. I attempted to construct such an amalgamated narrative from the emergent "Engagement as evidence-based intervention" story. It kind of worked. First it was too long. I was concerned that people might not want to read a story that carried on for ~2000 words. Secondly it became what I've been calling a Frankenstory. In my interpretation these articles are saying very much the same thing, but in slightly different ways and from somewhat different contexts. For instance, one story might be discussing a case study of a very institutional setting, another a very tightly focused story on an individual project. Stitching them together worked in some ways but it also left them disjointed and off-putting. Much like Frankenstein's monster they were likely to be misunderstood.

Consequently I've decided to change my method of presentation. I've accepted that one large part of writing is giving yourself permission to say certain things in certain ways. This story is a prime example of that. I've decided to give myself permission to write the individual story types--albeit from a transparent source of direct quotes. Visually, on the page, I'm foreseeing a two or three paragraph story. Followed by an interactive Prezi where I've highlighted different quotes that fall into certain narrative actions in these texts. The Prezi's will have short and personal debriefs on each section. Back on the page, after the Prezi, I'll follow up with a 3-5 paragraph discussion of the story, some direct references, and some implications. I think this will make the stories more approachable and recognizable while providing ample evidence for the narrative decisions I've made.

This adds another question regarding the validity of my work. But as I pointed out in the caveats for this chapter I'm keen to keep an eye toward honest storytelling and catalytic validity. Both of which require I provide a narrative that is "true" and readable. While the Frankenstories might have been "alive" at some point--they weren't exactly suitable for the conversation I want to promote.

**September 26, 2014**

I discussed the revised formatting of this piece with Scott over a road-trip we took to West Virginia University to speak about the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act. He understood and we both acknowledge this interpretive endeavor is not scientific. I'd be mistaken to try and approach these stories with a scientific and reductive logic. Rather the power of this piece comes from my ability to narrate these works through a hermeneutic lens. I'm interpreting similarity between works and trying to represent them in a way that nurtures conversation, not in a way that does away with the need for conversation, and dissent especially.

**October 6, 2014**

Today I worked to finish the first engagement story: "Engagement as evidence-based intervention." In the end I decided to combine this story line with another parallel one: Engagement as intervention adaptation. The latter of the two is still filled with the discourse of evidence-based practice but it also includes the necessity of adapting RCTs to meet on the ground conditions--particularly when dealing with different age groups, ethnicities, and cultures broadly. I thought the combination allowed for an appreciative lens in the story and also highlights some of the internal dimensions of the evidence-based movement.

**October 16, 2014**

I've revisited many of the documents I've read so far and reorganized them into a public Google document of engagement stories.

Today I ran across a couple of documents in the archive that I eventually excluded--one of which accounts for a new exclusion criteria. This article by Favish et al. (2012) gives a broad account of institutionalizing an idea of engagement across a university. Many articles make mention of this need for institutionalization but do so from a case-specific position. This article on the other hand outlined institutional framing of engagement (or by its terms, social responsiveness) and the politics thereof without a specific grounding in a practice story. It's an interesting read but has very little storytelling around my focus between the university and the broader public. Much like the stories of service learning, these "institutionalization" stories give

little story space for articulating specific relationships with broader communities. To echo Mary Parker Follett, these magic stories are just vague enough to be agreeable. New exclusion criteria:

- Articles that focus on institutionalizing engagement that have little direct articulation of relationships with broader communities.

#### **November 4, 2014**

There are a few articles I've run across that detail a scholar/practitioner working with a group, youth for instance, and positing that community engagement by this group has a positive effect on their behavior, prospects, etc. What's detailed in these stories is not necessarily the relationship between the scholar/practitioner but rather the benefits that some service recipient may experience when taking part in a very broad notion of civic engagement. I've decided to exclude these articles as they don't detail the relationship between authorial selves and others in the story but rather others and their rather vague interaction with some unnamed public. New exclusion criteria:

- Articles that focus on encouraging the civic engagement of others with further publics. For instance, an article may claim that participating in community meetings has a positive affect on the education outcomes of at-risk youth. These articles don't detail the relationship between public institutions and the publics they work with but rather the relationships between publics and the further publics of which they are a part.

#### **December, 2014**

I've reached saturation—stopping at 75 articles (Abrash & Whiteman, 1999; Allotey et al., 2014; Alvial-Palavicino, Garrido-Echeverría, Jiménez-Estévez, Reyes, & Palma-Behnke, 2011; Angwenyi et al., 2014; Atterton & Thompson, 2010; Barnett, Silver, & Grundy, 2009; Bender et al., 2014; Block, 2010; Bowler, Buchanan-Smith, & Whiten, 2012; Carlisle, 2010; Castañeda, 2008; Chen et al., 2013; Coles, 2014; Cortez et al., 2011; Dare, Schirmer, & Vanclay, 2011; de Luca, 2014; Doron, Teh, Haklay, & Bell, 2011; Dyer et al., 2014; Edwards, 2009; El Zahabi-Bekdash & Lavery, 2010; Escobar, Faulkner, & Rea, 2014; Faust et al., 2005; Featherstone, Weitkamp, Ling, & Burnet, 2008; Frabutt, Forsbrey, & Mackinnon-lewis, 2003; Gaffikin & Morrissey, 2008; Garau, 2012; Garber, Creech, Epps, Bishop, & Chapman, 2010; Greene, 2006; Gregson, Watkins, Broughton, Mackenzie, & Shepherd, 2012; Grinker et al., 2012; Gunaratna, Olbricht, Lipka, Watkins, & Yoshida, 2006; Hagger-Johnson, Hegarty, Barker, & Richards, 2013; Hart, Northmore, Gerhardt, & Rodriguez, 2009; Heffner, Zandee, & Schwander, 2003; Howard et al., 2010; J. James et al., 2008; Jarvis, Berkeley, & Broughton, 2011; Jordan et al., 2013; Kevany & MacMichael, 2014; Khodyakov et al., 2013; Lally, Brooks, Tax, & Dolan, 2007; Laninga, Austin, & McClure, 2011; MacKinnon-Lewis & Frabutt, 2001; Macnaghten, 2008; Marais, 2008; McKinnis, Sloan, Snow, & Garimella, 2014; Mendel et al., 2011; Michener et al., 2008; Munro, 2013; Nadarajah, 2005; Nakibinge et al., 2009; Nation et al., 2011; O'Daniel et al., 2012; O'Sullivan et al., 2014; Obasi & Lekorwe, 2014; Palmer-Wackerly, Krok, Dailey, Kight, & Krieger, 2014; Parks & Theobald, 2013; Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2008; A. R. Perry, 2011; Petersen, Baillie, & Bhana, 2012; Pickering & Rill, 2008; Polanyi & Cockburn, 2003; Puma, Bennett, Cutforth, Tombari, & Stein, 2009; Radstake, Nelis, van den Heuvel-Vromans, & Dortmans, 2009; Raz, 2003; Rocks et al., 2009; Sandercock & Attili, 2010; Selin, 2011; Tagle, 2003; Tamminga & De Ciantis, 2012; Travers et al., 2013; van Oudheusden, 2011; Wade & Greenberg, 2009; Yacoob, Hetzler, & Langer, 2004; Yankelovich & Furth, 2006; Yapa, 2009).

In review these articles meet the following inclusion/exclusion criteria

- Grounds for inclusion include:
  - Peer-reviewed articles that include the phrase “engagement” in reference to community-institutional relationships
  - Additionally all articles were included from the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, the *Journal for Civic Commitment*, the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, as well as the *Public Understanding of Science*.

- Additionally several journals have had special editions pertinent to engagement, particularly; *New Directions for Higher Education* (Winter 2010), the *Journal of Public Affairs* (January 2002), the *American Sociologist* (September 2007), the *South African Review of Sociology* (June 2012), and *Science and Engineering Ethics* (December 2011) which have been included in the original data set in their totality.
- Grounds for exclusion include
  - Review articles which involve no thorough description of direct experience.
  - Articles that are, for the most part, only student-centric--this excludes many articles in service learning that don't discuss relationships with people outside of the university in great detail.
  - Articles that are primarily discussions of method. For instance, articles aren't included if they spend the largest portion of time discussing a method or model primarily. They may include a short description of how this method was used in practice but don't include a sufficient narration of experience.
  - Concept articles. If the article on engagement is just about exploring that word, or a facet of that work through philosophical concepts without a substantial amount of time spent on describing a real case study of such concepts in action, then they haven't been included.
  - Policy articles. Articles that focus primarily on large institutional interactions and advocate for certain policies without direct narration of experience aren't included.
  - Articles that focus on institutionalizing engagement that have little direct articulation of relationships with broader communities.
  - Articles that focus on encouraging the civic engagement of others with further publics. For instance, an article may claim that participating in community meetings has a positive affect on the education outcomes of at-risk youth. These articles don't detail the relationship between public institutions and the publics they work with but rather the relationships between publics and the further publics of which they are a part.

Of the slightly less than 500 articles that met the inclusion/exclusion criteria I've interpreted 75, or nearly one in every six of them.

I believe this study adequately conveys the major narratives present in the peer-reviewed archive of engagement as of 2014. Beyond this institutionally sanctioned archive there are further stories that could be shared. Likely, in the future, we will be presented with new stories of engagement.

## Appendix F: Glossary

**Disrupting**—One basic element of a story's plot is a disruption or a challenge (Ganz, 2011, p. 281). Likewise in teaching academic writing an introductory paragraph often should include a widely agreeable perspective on the world, and something that then disrupts that perspective. The disrupting facet of narrative sense-making is what gives a story its tension and necessitates that we read further for some sort of (re)solution. For example: "The authors began to realize that it was not pedagogical limitations or lack of resources that placed robust public scholarship just beyond their grasp, but rather the need for a relational presence in local places, and the sensibilities and nimble responses to local exigencies that come with it. The challenge was not to bring the studio into the community. The challenge was to engage deeply enough to attain the goals of reciprocity, co-learning, and co-generation of imaginative solutions to place-based problems" (Tamminga & De Ciantis, 2012, pp. 121-122).

**Evaluating**—At its broadest, evaluating is about assessing how a story-world has changed in the process of the story (Herman, 2009, p. 134). Often, in the discourse archive interpreted in this paper, evaluating is a final moment in the sequence of engagement where change is measured using certain kinds of evidence. So evaluating in this context not only infers how a world has changed, it also begs how much, and how one knows. For example: "To document and evaluate intervention implementation, we discuss how, and to what extent, the implementation goals of community engagement and collaborative planning were achieved in the intervention arm of the study. In assessing community engagement, we examine agency participation in study meetings, emergence of community leaders, and relationship building among intervention participants. In assessing collaborative intervention planning, we examine the extent of adaptation of study toolkits, development of community-oriented training in collaborative depression care, and development of depression-related community network and resources" (Khodyakov et al., 2013, p. 313).

**Individual**—A notion of the self that is contained within the "contagion of feeling" which "cannot antedate the group process" (Follett, 1918, Chapter 4). This is the I in the plural which is We. In practice what it requires is the finding and understanding of one's individual self among and in others. It's the individual the group makes possible.

**Moralizing**—This refers to why a story ought to be told and listened to. Here we find an explicit or implicit rationale that places a story in a moral context. This definition doesn't include the connotation of "moralizing" as coming with an air of superiority--though engagement stories can indeed come with that tone. For example: "Challenging scientists' assumptions about the public can be an important step towards a more mature conversation about science and its ends" (Macnaghten, 2008, p.113).

**Orienting**—In the Labovian model of narration, orientation refers to various contextual factors that frame the disrupting situation (Herman, 2009, p. 190; Labov, 1972). In engagement discourse this context is often provided to orient readers toward a certain view of the disruption and foreshadow its possible solution. For example: "Regular ways of dealing with uncertainty through prediction are insufficient. The linear model of innovation, in which the future flows neatly from the past, is outdated. An accurate prediction of technology and societal relations is not possible. The option to wait and see is not viable, nor responsible, for a variety of reasons, one of which revolves around the hardening of

socio-technical pathways: once a pathway develops, it is difficult to change course. Guiding emerging technologies towards desirable societal outcomes and ensuring that positive impacts outweigh the negative requires upstream engagement which evaluates new technologies at an early stage, before lock-in limits the range of choices available" (Selin, 2011, p. 725)

**Othering**—The "other" features prominently in engagement discourse. The other in engagement discourse is someone, or some community, that while playing a big role in the story is not the self. The other is narrated as having certain characteristics such as capacities, deficiencies, and aspirations. The other's relationship to the disrupting situation is highly variable between engagement stories though often they live in or otherwise possess the disrupting situation. However, there are many more possibilities. For example: "The network of organizations, especially labor unions and teachers' groups, which sponsored workshops and otherwise utilized the film as an organizing and educational tool, formed an alternative pathway for political and social expression"(McKinnis et al., 2014, p. 193).

**Particularist**—As opposed to the individual (I which is we in the plural) particularist describes an ego/alter-driven notion of self, disassociated from the whole complex of related life. The sympathy or service it conjures "goes across from one isolated being to another"(Follett, 1918, Chapter 4).

**Perceiving**—This elemental facet of narrative sense-making attempts to convey to a listener/reader "what it's like" to be in a certain situation (Herman, 2009, pp. 21-22; 143-153). Perceiving, is about emotive language. To complicate matters, this kind of language is often lacking in general academic discourse. Truth and facts often overrun any focus on the qualia of a given experience. However the bridging metaphor of engagement invites the language of feeling more than other, more detached genres. For example: "Our research presents a picture of emergent public opinion that differs to some extent from the existing literature on public attitudes towards nanotechnology. It highlights a latent ambivalence towards nanotechnologies, and suggests that there is likely to be public unease as the technology unfolds in real-world circumstances. What is perhaps most interesting is that this ambivalence did not diminish through greater knowledge and awareness. Instead, through exposure to the multiple ways in which the debate was being characterized, and through debate and deliberation, our participants moved towards a more skeptical view as to the ability of government and industry to represent the public interest (Macnaghten, 2008, p. 112).

**Positioning**-- Both selfing and othering are acts of positioning that develop the characters in any story of engagement. Though there are still others beyond the main actors that are in the mix as well. When I refer to general positioning I'm pointed both selves and others in relation to each other and those beyond which helps further frame the story in some way. For example: "Moreover, since mothers are often children's primary caregivers, the extent to which both resident and non-resident fathers have access to their children influences their opportunities to apply the skills that they develop in fatherhood programs. Therefore, it may be that partnering with agencies that provide services to mothers and children can facilitate programming aimed at addressing negative interpersonal issues that inhibit fathers' involvement" (Perry, 2011, p. 22).

**Selfing**—In the archive of literature I've built for this study the "self" is the author or authors of the piece along with the institutions they inhabit. Most often, since this is peer-reviewed literature, the author works in an academic institution. In a "selfing" act, the author is framing themselves, their discipline, or their institution as having some identity

characteristics pertinent to the story. Often this involves some sort of capital (economic, political, and/or knowledge) that the self brings to bear in solving a problem explored in the story. For example: "Researchers and physicians at academic health centers (AHCs)—including Duke University Medical Center and Health System—are often viewed as the vanguards of innovation, testing creative solutions to reduce suffering and save lives. And, in most respects, they are." (Michener, 2008, p. 408)

**Sequencing**—Stories follow a certain time sequence. Something happens, then something else. Something arises and a decision is made to do this or that. In engagement, sequencing can show us the order of actions that characters go through in order to make the world as it is, the way it should be. Many academic engagement stories tell of, and often advocate for, some kind of method which has a certain order to it. During interpretation, this is a great place to look for fit between a story's rhetoric and its reality. For example: "Phase 2 followed the four lessons. It included 6 monthly community group activities to reinforce target behaviors. Community group activities included field trips to: (a) local parks for group trail walks and games, (b) grocery stores to identify affordable healthy drinks, and (c) a fast-food restaurant to identify healthy food choices. A cooking class on preparing healthy cultural meals was also included" (Bender, Clark, & Gahagan, 2014, p. 4).

**Situating**—All narratives are situated. That is, there is some understood occasion for them being told. From bedtime stories, to ritual ceremony, to, in this case, peer-reviewed literature all stories should be interpreted within a specific discourse context that they are participating in. This current project interprets the peer-reviewed archive in order to further situate engagement stories into different and more specific discourse contexts. In academic literature these contexts often align themselves within particular disciplines. In these narrative chunks we often find traces of where a narrative speaks from and who a narrative intends to speak to. For example: "At the same time, exploring public views on the future direction of science and engineering is becoming an increasingly valued source of evidence for policymakers and for other stakeholders. Scientists and policymakers are [428] increasingly recognizing the need to engage the public "upstream" – early in the development of new technologies" (Rocks et al. 2009, pp.427-428).

**Visioning**—Scattered throughout an engagement story we can find future-oriented visions of the world as it should be. There remains a great diversity between what these visions are, and who/where they come from. For example: "The production and circulation of *The Uprising of '34* encapsulates George Stoney's vision of how films should be made and shown. For Stoney, each step of the process provides an opportunity to engage community interest, shape the story, change one's perspective, and act for social betterment. It is about making sense of your world and participating in it" (Abrash & Whiteman, 1999, p.88)

**Worldmaking**—How does a story describe the world? "Mapping words (or other kinds of semiotic cues) onto worlds is a fundamental – perhaps the fundamental – requirement for narrative sense-making" (Herman, 2009, p. 105). Ask yourself, what is the world full of in any particular story? Often in engagement stories this facet is highly related to the disrupting force in question – so much so that they're hardly distinguishable concepts. For example: "Kirklands is one of many towns hit by the demise of heavy industry and therefore has much in common with other former industrial communities across Scotland. The area has a history of Irish immigrant labour, resulting in a sectarian division into Catholic and Protestant elements. According to the local benefits agency, unemployment is up to 57%. The town's worst areas of social housing have been

demolished and re-built but room for improvement remains. The Health Board reports Kirklands as the most deprived population in its area" (Carlisle, 2010, p. 120).



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